# CHAPTER 3

# The Northumbrians: origins of a people

At the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History* Bede defines the peoples of Britain in terms of their languages: 'At the present time, there are five languages in Britain...These are the English, British, Irish, Pictish, as well as the Latin languages; through the study of the scriptures, Latin is in general use among them all.' The categorization of the peoples of Britain as fourfold – English, British, Irish and Pictish – is found elsewhere in the *Ecclesiastical History*. It is echoed in the document which formed one of Bishop Wilfrid's appeals to Rome and which refers to 'the northern part of Britain and Ireland and the islands, which are inhabited by the races of English (*Angli*) and British as well as Scots and Picts'. For Bede, the 'people of the Northumbrians' (*gens Nordanhymbrorum*) formed part of the English.[1]

There is strong evidence, both negative and positive, for the Englishness of the Northumbrian elite in Bede's time. The negative evidence consists, first, of Bede's summing up of the position of the British at the time he completed his *Ecclesiastical History* in 731:

> Though, for the most part, the British oppose the English through their inbred hatred, and the whole state of the catholic church by their incorrect Easter and their evil customs, yet being opposed by the power of God and man alike, they

[1] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 1, bk 3 ch. 6 (where Bede refers to four languages, that is omitting Latin); and Stephen, *Life Wilf.*, ch. 53 (pp. 114–15). Note that contemporary writers use the words *gens* (people), *natio* (nation), *populus* (people) in ways in which it is very hard for us to see how they were distinct or what any distinctions there may have been signified (see, for example, Putnam Fennell Jones (1929), under appropriate entries; for discussion, see Tugène (2001b), pp. 18–19).

cannot obtain what they want in either respect. For although they are partly their own masters, yet they have also been brought partly under the rule of the English.[2]

It is not clear what Bede meant by the British who are partly their own masters as against those who were partly under the rule of the English. Possibly he was thinking of the British kingdoms of Strathclyde to the north-west of Northumbria, of Gwynedd and the other Welsh kingdoms, and perhaps especially of Dumnonia in south-west Britain, the Britons of which he described as 'subject to the West Saxons'.[3] The important point, however, is that Bede did not envisage any British as being under full English rule. Within Northumbria, therefore, and presumably in the other English kingdoms also, Bede considered that the people who mattered viewed themselves as entirely English.

Secondly, recognizably British individuals and groups in Northumbria appear only very rarely in the writings of Bede and his contemporaries. Stephen, in his *Life of Wilfrid*, tells a story of how a woman brought her dead son to Wilfrid, who restored him to life, commanding that, when the child reached the age of seven, she should give him to Wilfrid for the service of God. The mother broke her promise and 'fled from her land' (*fugiens de terra sua*) with her son. But in vain – the bishop's prefect (*prefectus*) found the boy hiding 'amongst others of the British' (*sub aliis Bryttonum*) and brought him by force to serve in Wilfrid's church at Ripon. Stephen does not tell us where these British lived, nor does he make clear whether the woman was one of them, although the wording seems to imply that she was. At all events, neither her village nor the abode of the British who gave her sanctuary were distant enough to be beyond the power of Wilfrid's prefect. The British moreover were not high enough up the social scale as to be in a position to resist the prefect's demands.[4] British of perhaps even lower status appear in the account in the *History of St Cuthbert* of how Cuthbert was granted Cartmel (Cumberland) with the Britons dwelling on the land, presumably as slaves.[5]

In Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, it is possible that Aidan's disciple Chad (*Ceadda*) was of British extraction to judge from his name which is probably

[2] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 5 ch. 23 (for Northumbrian dominance of Gwynedd in King Edwin's time, see above, pp. 42–3).

[3] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 5 ch. 18, probably referring to the letter of Aldhelm to King Geraint of Dumnonia (Lapidge and Herren (1979), pp. 155–60). On Dumnonia, see Pearce (1978).

[4] Stephen, *Life Wilf.*, ch. 18; for the possible identification of the woman's village with Tidover (Yorkshire West Riding), see G. J. R. Jones (1979), pp. 31 (fig. 2.5) and 33, and G. J. R. Jones (1995), pp. 22–6.

[5] *Hist. Cuth.*, para. 6. Although the grammar of the passage is corrupt, and Johnson South (2002), p. 49, interprets it to mean that the Britons in question helped to grant the land, the meaning here assumed seems to involve less emendation of the text.

British, although it is not clear that he came from Northumbria. The name of the Whitby cow-herd who received a miraculous gift of song, Cædmon, is certainly British, although part of the point of the story is that he was of low social class.[6] Aside from the possibility that the British bishops who consecrated Chad did so in Northumbria, the only British person to be identified in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* as British and in English territory is in an account of one of the miracles of King Oswald of Northumbria. The person in question (*de natione Brettonum*) was passing near the place where the king had been killed in battle, when he noticed that

> a certain patch of ground was greener and more beautiful than the rest of the field. He very wisely conjectured that the only cause for the unusual greenness of that part must be that some man holier than the rest of the army had perished there. So he took some of the soil with him wrapped up in a cloth, thinking that it might prove useful, as was indeed to happen, as a cure for sick persons. He went on his way and came in the evening to a certain village, entering a house where the villagers (*uicani*) were enjoying a feast. He was received by the owners of the house and sat down to the feast with them, hanging up the cloth containing the dust he had brought on one of the wall-posts.

The upshot was that the feast engendered carelessness which led to a fire, which consumed all the house except the bag containing the soil and the post on which it hung – thus demonstrating the power and virtue of the soil and the sanctity of Oswald. As regards the British man, we are handicapped by not knowing for certain where the battle, called by Bede *Maserfelth*, took place. If it was at Oswestry in Shropshire, close to the Welsh Border, as was believed already in the twelfth century, the British person may have been an inhabitant of Wales passing through; and even if he were a resident this would probably have been of Mercia, in which kingdom Oswestry lay, rather than Northumbria. Even if *Maserfelth* was somewhere in Northumbria, however, and the British person was a resident of that kingdom, we should again be struck by the low social class assigned to him. He was clearly on a level with the villagers, the rustic country folk, and not with the elite. Of an identifiably British elite in Northumbria there is thus virtually no trace in our written sources, in which British names are notable for their almost complete absence.[7]

[6] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 4 ch. 24 (22); on Chad, John McKinnell, pers. comm., and on Cædmon, Jackson (1953), p. 554.

[7] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 3 ch. 10; on Oswestry see Stancliffe (1995b). In view of the paucity of references in our sources, it is hard to share the view that 'many people living in Northumbria in Cædmon's period are unambiguously named as British by our sources' (Moorhead (2001), p. 105).

The evidence of place-names, although hard to interpret because of the difficulty of establishing when the names were coined, suggests the presence of a British population in Northumbria. First, certain place-names contain elements referring to communities of British in Northumbria. These comprise place-names such as Walworth (County Durham) and Walton (Yorkshire West Riding), which have in them the Old English place-name element *Walh-*, that is Welshman or British person; and place-names which have in them the synonymous *Brettas-* (British), as in Bretton (Yorkshire West Riding), and *Cumbre-* (from *Cymry* or British), as in Cumberworth (Yorkshire West Riding). Names with the element *eccles*, derived from the British word for church, as in Ecclesall (Yorkshire West Riding), may also indicate the existence of British communities, since the church from which they were named was presumably one that served such a community. Elsewhere in England, names with the element *wickham* have been interpreted as indicating the existence of British communities, since the first element is supposed to be derived from the Latin *uicus* (settlement), and the distribution of these names suggests that the places to which they are attached may have reflected the Roman settlement pattern. Although such names do not occur in Northumbria, the element *wic* is found, as in Market Weighton (Yorkshire East Riding) and Barwick in Elmet (Yorkshire West Riding), and it too was presumably derived from *uicus* and indicates some relationship to the Roman settlement pattern. The occurrence of all these types of name thus helps to demonstrate the existence of communities of British in the Northumbrian heartlands, especially in the east, albeit – to judge from the distribution of the names – scattered and isolated ones.[8]

Other place-names, because they are formed from words or names derived from the British language, provide evidence for the currency of that language in at least some parts of Northumbria at some period. There is a number of such names in the Northumbrian heartlands: Yeavering is an example, so too is Auckland (County Durham), and so too is Catterick, which Bede uses in a form which, it has been argued, he must have heard spoken by British-speakers. The British name for the place where King Edwin had a royal vill, *Cambodunum*, was presumably in use in Bede's day (although it is no longer), and Bede seems to have learned this too by word of mouth, presumably from British-speakers. Bede knew Carlisle by its Roman name *Lugubalia*,

[8] Gelling (1997), pp. 67–74 and 87–105. For the place-name elements, see A. H. Smith (1956), I, pp. 50 (*Brettas*), 119–20 (*Cumbre*), 144–5 (*eccles*), II, pp. 242–4 (*walh*), 257–63 (*wic*, where the Roman associations are much less developed than in Gelling's work on *wickham* names). For Walworth, see Watts and Insley (2002), pp. 131–2.

itself derived from the British name *Luel* which he also used. The district of *Ahse* referred to in the Anonymous *Life of St Cuthbert* appears to derive from the Romano-British name for the fort of Great Chesters (*Aesica*), and that of Brougham (Cumberland) seems likewise to derive from the Romano-British name for the fort there (*Brocauum*). British names for rivers are also found, although much less so in the east than in the west, suggesting the continuance of a British population familiar with them, and a small concentration of British names in the North Yorkshire Moors may bear witness to a substantial British community there. Between the Tweed and the Forth generally, we find somewhat more numerous British names. These include names using British elements such as *aber* meaning 'river-mouth' as in Aberlady (Haddingtonshire), *pevr* meaning 'radiant' or 'beautiful' as in Peffer Mill (Midlothian), *pren* meaning 'tree' as in Pirnie (Roxburghshire), *cair* meaning 'fort' or 'manor', and *pol* meaning 'pool' or 'hole'. Certain British elements in place-names, namely *ucheldref* meaning 'high settlement' as in Ochiltree, and *pebyll* meaning 'tent' or 'temporary shelter' in Papple (Haddingtonshire), seem to relate to the practice of transhumance and suggest the presence not only of British language but also of British customs. So too does *mynydd* meaning 'mountain' but also 'upland pasture', as in Mindrum. It is nevertheless important to emphasize that in the lands south of the Forth and in the Northumbrian heartlands most villages and hamlets which do not have Viking names (which they must have received at a later period) have English names. Such names are dense even in the area north of the Tweed, and they include ones with elements regarded as early in date, such as *ingaham* meaning 'village of the people of' as in Tyninghame (Berwickshire). The dominance of English names throughout Northumbria east of the Pennines is extremely striking.[9]

This dominance of English names extends even to the remote settlements in the Cheviot Hills which are named in a passage in the *History of St Cuthbert* purporting to be a grant made to St Cuthbert in the late seventh century: 'Then the king [Ecgfrith] and all the English magnates gave to St Cuthbert all that land that lies near the Bowmont Water, with these vills: Sourhope (?),

[9] On Auckland, which in one form is identical to *Alcluith* (Dumbarton), see Watts and Insley (2002), pp. 9–10; on *Ahse*, Brougham, *Cambodunum*, Carlisle and Catterick, see Rivet and Smith (1979), pp. 242, 283–4, 302–4, 292–3, 402; on the North Yorkshire Moors, see Jackson (1953), pp. 238, 490, 680; on place-names in Scotland, see Nicolaisen (2001), pp. 61–108, and Geoffrey W. S. Barrow (1998), pp. 55–68. On rivers, see Kenneth Cameron (1977), pp. 33–46 and map; for mapping of rivers and British names, see A. H. Smith (1956), end-pocket map 2. Useful maps and summaries are to be found in Peter G. B. McNeill and MacQueen (1996), pp. 50–1, 61. See also Faull (1977), p. 45 (map 7b: Celtic place-names in Yorkshire).

Staerough, Old Graden, Pawston, Clifton, Shereburgh (?), Colewell, Halterburn, Thornington (?), Shotton, Kirk Yetholm and Mindrum.'[10] The only one of these tiny, rural settlements to have a name which is certainly derived from the British language is Mindrum, the first element of which is the British *mynydd*, noted above. Even the Bowmont, although a river-name which might be expected to be British in comparison with others, may be of English origin, meaning 'winding eel-river'.[11]

It does not follow that place-names necessarily reflect the ethnic composition of the settlements that bore them; the English names, for example, could have been coined by a not very numerous English ruling elite without reference to the language spoken by the inhabitants of the settlements to which they were given. In the face of such widespread English names, however, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the population in all the lands south of the Firth of Forth came to regard itself as predominantly English and was principally English-speaking. This conclusion is reinforced by our Latin sources, which leave us in no real doubt that the vernacular language of those parts of Northumbria which Bede knew was Old English, the language of the English incomers, virtually uninfluenced (as the overall development of Old English suggests) by the language of the native British. As Bede lay dying, he broke into a poem in Old English:

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|---|---|
| For þam neodfere | nenig wyrþeð |
| þances snottra, | þonne him þearf sy, |
| to gehiggenne | ær his heonengange, |
| hwæt his gaste | godes oððe yfeles, |
| æfter deaðe heonen | demed wurðe. |

Facing that enforced journey, no man can be
More prudent than he has good call to be,
If he consider, before his going hence,
What for his spirit of good or of evil
After his day of death shall be determined.[12]

Bede then turned in his last hours to translating St John's Gospel into Old English. Similarly, when Cædmon miraculously broke into song, it

[10] *Hist. Cuth.*, para. 3. The identifications are those in Johnson South (2002), p. 43.

[11] For Mindrum, see Mawer (1920). The fact that its second element is Gaelic *druim* meaning 'ridge' presumably reflects Scottish influence of a later period when Mindrum lay on the border of the kingdom of Scotland. For the Bowmont, see Ekwall (1928), pp. 45–6.

[12] Ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors (1969), p. 583 (trans. repr. McClure and Collins (1994), p. 301).

was – despite his apparently British name – in Old English that he did so. His song is one of a small group of Old English texts which can be assigned to Northumbria on grounds of the Northumbrian dialect in which they are composed. If we turn to the later middle ages, we find that a northern dialect of English, closely related to Lowland Scots, was the vernacular throughout the areas north of the Humber frontier, right up to the ancient northern frontiers of Northumbria on the Firth of Forth, and beyond. It was presumably the successor of Northumbrian Old English.[13]

The evidence of place-names west of the Pennines is more complex. There occur in Cumbria (that is the later counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and northern Lancashire), in addition to British river-names, five or six clusters of British settlement-names. One of these is around Carlisle which itself retained a version of its Romano-British name (*Luguuallium*), fused with the British element *cair*; and a second is found around the Hadrian's Wall fort of *Aesica* (Great Chesters), which may have given its name (as we have seen) to the district of *Ahse*. The evidence from this area, however, is complicated by the problem of whether the other, quite numerous British settlement-names to be found there represent survivals from the pre-Northumbrian period or whether they are new introductions of the tenth and eleventh centuries when the kings of the Cumbrians and of Strathclyde ruled Cumbria. The latter has been argued on semantic grounds, the former principally on the grounds that the British name clusters are mostly in out-of-the-way parts of Cumbria such as Tyndale, and it is therefore more likely that they are the result of survival in the face of English conquest than of the later conquest by Strathclyde British who would presumably have been in a position to impose their names on more central places. In either case, Cumbria looks to have been very English-dominated in the pre-Viking period. If the names are pre-Viking, they show only that British presence was peripheral while English presence was central; if they are late, they have no relevance to the period of the origins of Northumbria and the place-name evidence from Cumbria similarly points to English dominance. There is nothing in the archaeological record to contradict this. Although distinctively pagan English graves have only been found in the valley of the River Eden in the east of the area, their absence from more westerly areas could have resulted from

[13] On Cædmon, see Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 4 ch. 24 (22); for the Old English text of Cædmon's hymn, see A. H. Smith and Swanton (1978), pp. 38–41. On Northumbrian dialect, see below, p. 117. The most detailed mapping of late medieval English, which unfortunately deals only cursorily with southern Scotland, is Samuels, Laing and Williamson (1986). For Lowland Scots, see Murison (1979), pp. 2–3. For the general development of English, see Wakelin (1988), pp. 45–84.

the fact that the English only penetrated into those areas after they had ceased to place in their burials the grave-goods which allow archaeologists to recognize them.[14]

To the north-west, we come to the area north of the Solway Firth, as far as the Northumbrian episcopal see at Whithorn and beyond. Place-names with British elements are widely distributed in this area; but so too are names with English elements in their make-up, even as far west as Whithorn itself and the Rhinns of Galloway (map 3). Indeed, it has been possible in the case of Galloway and the area of Carrick to the north of it to build up a picture of a patchwork of English and British settlement, and to perceive the English as organized into three units with British in the intervening lands. The Old English place-name element *botl* meaning 'house' or 'palace' is important in this respect, for example in the name Buittle (Kircudbrightshire) which seems to be the centre of a concentration of English settlement, and Aisbutil, meaning 'frontier palace'. The existence around these places of an English administrative structure which levied tribute payments from the British settlements is hinted at by names such as Shirmers (embodying Old English *scir-(ge)-maere*, meaning 'shire boundary') and possibly Penninghame (Wigtownshire), which may embody the Old English element *pening*, meaning penny. The name would then mean 'farm on which a penny geld is payable' and thus be evidence of the imposition of an English taxation system. In Galloway and Carrick, we appear therefore to have a less thorough effacement of the British than to the east, but none the less English dominance.[15] The inference from the place-names that Old English was the predominant if not the dominant language is reinforced by the evidence of English culture in the region to be discussed in the next chapter. But we should here note that the craftsmen who erected the great carved and inscribed stone cross at Ruthwell well to the west of Carlisle, probably in the eighth century, inscribed on it a version of the poem *The Dream of the Rood* in Old English.[16]

In the light of linguistic evidence, then, it seems that Bede was right to regard Northumbria in his own time as essentially English. In short, that part of the Roman Empire south of Hadrian's Wall and native areas to the north of it, both inhabited by British, had been welded into a kingdom which was regarded as English, inhabited by the 'people of the Northumbrians', as part

[14] On place-names, see Phythian-Adams (1996), pp. 77–87, arguing against Jackson (1963a), pp. 74–7, who generally treated the names as late formations. See also below, p. 250. For the text, see Anon., *Life Cuth.*, bk 4 ch. 5; for the burials, see O'Sullivan (1996).

[15] Daphne Brooke (1991); on Penninghame, see Hough (2001).

[16] See below, pp. 158–9.

of the wider lands in which lived the 'people of the English'. The question of how this had come about is controversial, and scholars' search for an answer has involved deploying highly complex arguments derived from often limited and ambiguous evidence of many types, textual, archaeological, topographical, semantic and so on. It seems best, therefore, first to set out the possible models or hypotheses which, in the light of what we know of Roman Britain and of developments elsewhere in western Europe after the end of the Roman Empire in the west, can be offered to explain the genesis of Northumbria; then to examine how far the available evidence can be marshalled to support one or more of them. Although, in reality, the evolution of Northumbria may have been a combination of one or more of these models, and although different parts of the kingdom almost certainly developed differently, the exercise of setting out the models and marshalling the evidence relating to them remains a valuable one, if only in showing the extent and limits of our understanding. The models in question, which we shall call Models 1–3, are the following:

**Model 1** involves a controlled cession of government to barbarian (English) mercenaries or federates, who then proceeded to create the kingdom of Northumbria. In other words, the Roman rulers of Britain saw it as advantageous to hand over political power to the English, and did so peacefully and by agreement. We could envisage the Roman rulers in question as being the imperial authorities of the Roman Empire, or as being what are often called 'sub-Roman' authorities. In the latter case, with the end of direct Roman rule by the Empire, a sort of *de facto* Roman organization would have continued for some time, and it was the Roman or British leaders of this who would have effected the controlled cession of power to the English. Either way, Model 1 involves a direct and more or less peaceful transition from Roman or 'sub-Roman' to Northumbrian, with a change in the ruling elite but not in the make-up and organization of the population as a whole.

**Model 2** similarly involves a more or less peaceful transition, but in this case from distinctively native British kingdoms to Northumbrian rulers, rather than directly or indirectly from the Roman Empire. According to this model, such kingdoms would have existed north of Hadrian's Wall during and after the Roman period, organized on native British lines and perhaps focused on British power-centres, such as hill-forts or fortified settlements (*oppida*). Similar British kingdoms

would have emerged south of Hadrian's Wall after the end of Roman rule, or perhaps those to the north would have extended southwards. Such kingdoms might have been focused on previous Roman power-centres; or they may have eschewed even the relics of Roman organization. If the latter, they may have represented re-assertion of native British organization, and presumably culture, amongst people who had barely accepted Romanization in all the long centuries of Roman rule in Britain. The rulers of these kingdoms would then have handed over power to incoming English who, as in Model 1, created Northumbria with themselves as the ruling elite and the basis of native society unchanged.

**Model 3** involves conquest of the area of Northumbria by incoming English with consequent destruction or degradation of the native British population and removal of its organizational structures. According to this model, there was no peaceful transition. Northumbria was a creation of the incoming English and owed little to either a Roman or a British past.

According to Model 3, then, Northumbria was English because the British had been exterminated, expelled or at best degraded by incoming English. Models 1 and 2 are based on the view that the Roman Empire in the area of Northumbria or its sub-Roman or British successors came to be dominated, for whatever reason, by an English ruling elite, who were eventually able to impose their language and culture on the British population, without necessarily altering in any fundamental way its organization and underlying social structure. According to these two models, language change to Old English was a cultural process, involving deliberate choice on the part of the British population to adopt English. In short, Models 1–2 envisage Northumbria as founded on British population, culture and political organization; and as in effect a British kingdom, the language and culture of which had been transformed by an English ruling elite. All three models can be evaluated both in terms of their plausibility in the wider context of the later Roman Empire and what succeeded to it elsewhere in Europe, and in terms of the specific evidence from Northumbria bearing on them.

The plausibility of Model 1 lies in the wider context of the role of barbarians in the later Roman Empire in the west, where the Roman authorities, especially in the fifth century, settled barbarians within the Roman Empire as federates (that is groups of soldiers retaining their own organization

and command), with responsibility for assisting the Roman authorities in warfare.[17] As Roman rule disintegrated in western Europe, it was a real possibility that power would have passed into the hands of the commanders of these barbarian contingents, who had the military capabilities to exercise authority in place of their former masters. The Roman emperors in Constantinople may have favoured this process because they viewed western Europe as a nest of usurpers (as indeed it had been) and as a potent source of trouble. Handing it over piecemeal to local barbarian chieftains may have seemed a not unattractive alternative to continuing to garrison it with troops in Roman pay with the attendant risk of a usurper emerging from their midst. Moreover, the Roman authorities may have had the means to achieve this constitutionally in the institution of *hospitalitas*, which originated in arrangements for the billeting of soldiers. In the late Roman period, it involved the transfer of lands to barbarians garrisoned in the provinces for their maintenance, or possibly the transfer of tax revenues directly to them by the Roman authorities. If this last occurred, it is easy to see how barbarian military leaders were able to set themselves up as the successors to the Roman provincial governors with the same financial infrastructure as their predecessors.[18]

Could something of this sort have happened in Northumbria? The Roman imperial province of *Britannia inferior*, which extended from the north into the midlands, was almost certainly ruled from York, which was after its foundation (probably in AD 71) the headquarters of a Roman legion throughout the Roman period, and was manifestly an important place. At some point in the late Roman period, the fortifications of its legionary fortress were reinforced on a grand scale with a line of polygonal towers facing the River Ouse. The court of the emperor Septimius Severus resided at York for over two years during his military campaigns in Britain (208–11). At York, too, the soldiers raised up as emperor Constantine (306), who then seized power over the whole Roman Empire and began the process of making it officially Christian. At York too in the last days of Roman rule was stationed the duke of the Britains, who was almost certainly responsible for the defence of Britain. Nor was York just a military centre. Around the legionary fortress, particularly in the area to the east of it towards the River Foss, there had

[17] Nicasie (1998), pp. 87–8, and Southern and Dixon (1996), pp. 46–52, 69–72. Mercenaries serving in the Roman armies themselves appear to have been less important: they were not overwhelmingly numerous in the Roman armies, at any rate before the late fourth century (Nicasie (1998), pp. 97–116).

[18] Goffart (1981) and, for *hospitalitas*, Goffart (1980).

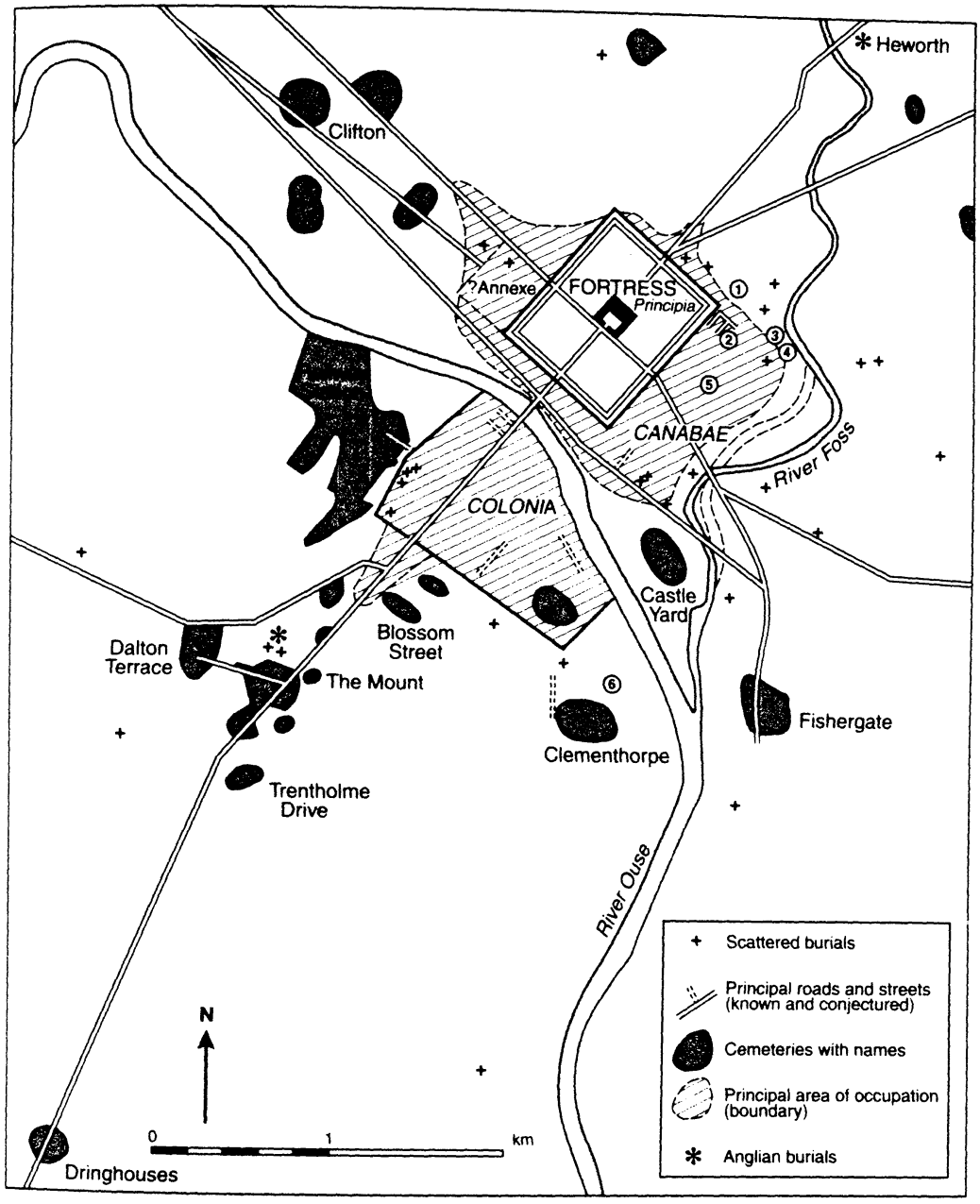
grown up a civilian area of some pretension, where there were temples and presumably also civilian housing. To the south of it, on the other bank of the River Ouse, lay the civilian town (*colonia*), which was also of some wealth and grandeur, as is shown by the elegant tombstones recovered from the cemeteries which surrounded it as was normal for Roman towns (map 7).[19] York thus provides evidence that Roman rule south of Hadrian's Wall was strong enough to have been capable of overseeing the sort of hand-over to barbarian federates which this model envisages. Carlisle was another important place for the Romans, the site of two legionary fortresses; and Roman power and interest extended north of Hadrian's Wall, for Roman roads led across what is now northern Northumberland and southern Scotland, especially to the so-called outpost forts, which were probably occupied until at least the early fourth century. Beyond them, even the native tribes may have been subject to Roman-influenced organization, which was focused on tribal centres (*loca*).[20] A plausible context for Model 1 thus existed in terms of Roman organization.

There is, however, a serious chronological difficulty in proposing a direct hand-over from Roman authorities based in York and perhaps Carlisle to English incomers in that both written and archaeological sources suggest a substantial interval of time between the end of Roman rule and the arrival of English incomers. As regards written sources, a passage in the work of the Byzantine chronicler Zosimus suggests that direct Roman rule was withdrawn from Britain in 410, but the earliest presence of 'Saxons' in Britain was (according to the *Life of St Germanus* by Constantius) in 429. A 'Saxon' take-over of Britain is assigned to 441 by the so-called *Gallic Chronicle* of 452, and to 449 by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*. (The only reference to 'Saxons' in Britain before the 410 withdrawal of Roman rule is a reference to the year 408 in another passage in the *Gallic Chronicle*, the dates of which are, however, very suspect indeed because of its inconsistent use of different dating systems.) The fragmentary and unreliable character of the record these sources provide, the confusions of dating and events they embody and the unlikelihood that their authors were well informed about Britain might lead us to set them aside altogether.[21] The picture they give, however, is supported by archaeological evidence, to the extent that we cannot establish the presence

[19] See summary of scholarship in *Sources*, pp. 35–44. On the *colonia*, see the summary by Ottaway (1993), pp. 64–95; see also Brinklow (1984) and Ottaway (1984).

[20] On *loca*, see Mann (1978); on the outpost forts, see Frank Graham (1983) and, for their abandonment, Breeze and Dobson (2000), pp. 241–3.

[21] For general assessments, see Salway (1982), pp. 446–501; for discussion and more recent references, see Snyder (1998), pp. 29–49.




MAP 7 Roman York and its environs
Published in Ottaway (1993), fig. 1, where more details of the sites marked can be found. Note especially the location of the fortress, *colonia* and *canabae* (civilian area), and also the English ('Anglian') burials at Heworth and The Mount.

of substantial numbers of English in Britain, at any rate in Northumbria, until well after the end of Roman rule. No Roman coins found on sites along Hadrian's Wall and elsewhere in the north can be dated later than 408, and those of the late fourth century are notably rare. A similar terminal date is observable for Roman mass-manufactured pottery. This corroborates the written evidence, suggesting that Roman rule in north Britain was fatally disrupted at the latest by 410, since minting coins and mass-producing pottery had been made possible by the activity of the Roman imperial authorities in maintaining troops in north Britain as a captive market, and paying them in coin which could then be used to buy manufactured goods. The earliest archaeological evidence of barbarian presence in what was to become Northumbria is provided by a series of cemeteries which are of barbarian type. Although the dates assigned to them are far from precise, it is highly unlikely that they are earlier than the fifth century, and most are probably sixth century and later.[22]

If Model 1 applied to Northumbria, then, it must have involved hand-over of power to the English from sub-Roman rather than Roman authorities after the withdrawal of direct Roman rule. Three types of evidence can be used to support such a possibility. First, archaeological evidence from Roman sites can be interpreted as showing their continued use into the fifth or even sixth century, thus suggesting the existence of 'sub-Roman' authorities able to effect the sort of hand-over of power envisaged. The clearest case is that of the Hadrian's Wall fort of Birdoswald, where two timber halls were erected on the site of the granaries of the fort, without apparently any interval of time between the discontinuation of the original function of the granaries and the construction of the first of these new structures, which may have continued in use until 520 or even later, although the evidence for dating this is very imprecise. It can be argued that Birdoswald continued as a centre of sub-Roman authority even when direct Roman rule had ceased (fig. 2). Parallel evidence has been discovered at the Roman fort of Binchester (County Durham) on the Roman road called Dere Street, where the headquarters building seems to have been modified and continued in use in the fifth century, and at South Shields and the Hadrian's Wall forts of Housesteads and *Vindolanda*, where earthworks seem to have been constructed to reinforce the fortifications in the fifth century. There may also be evidence of

[22] On coins, see Brickstock (2000); on pottery, see Evans (2000); for cemeteries, see below, pp. 76–7. Welsby (1982), p. 164, has concluded that we should not expect to find barbarians in Britain at the end of Roman rule because 'there does not appear to have been any policy of settling barbarian groups within Britain' before *c.* 410.

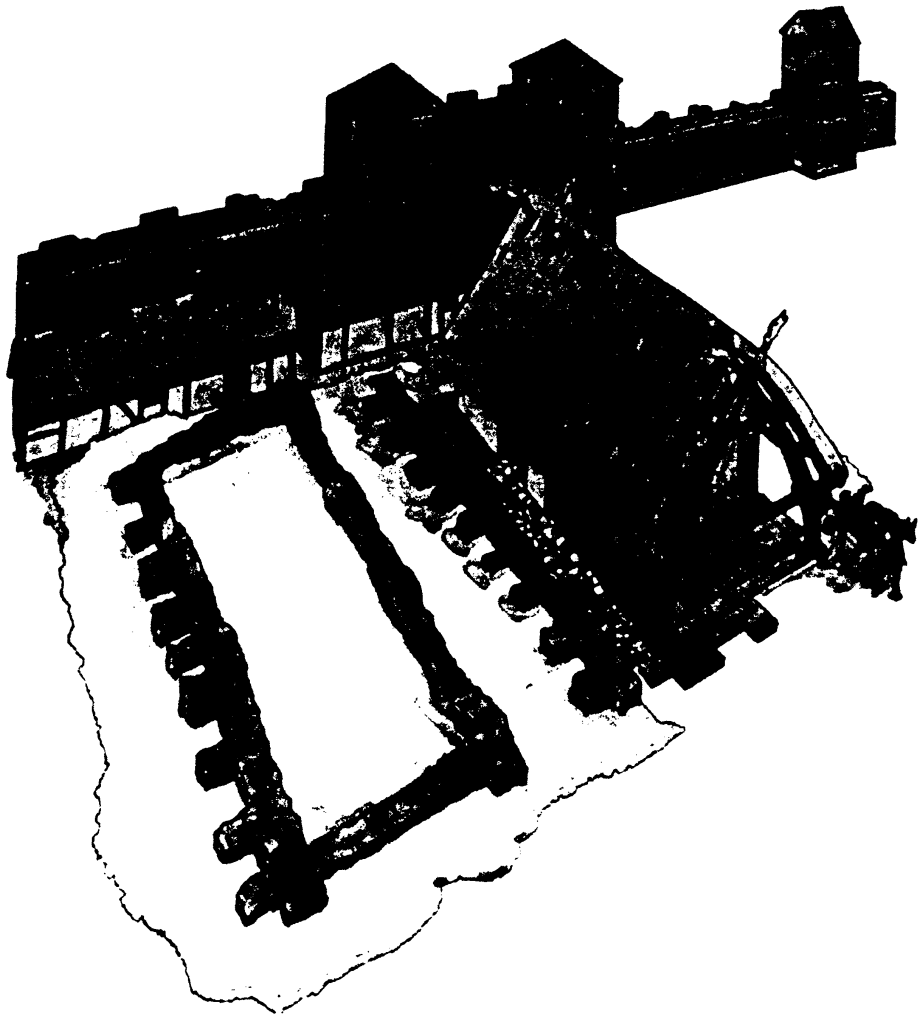


FIGURE 2 Birdoswald (Cumberland), reconstruction of the hall and service buildings of the second phase of post-Roman timber buildings (drawn by Kate Wilson)

The hall, which measures 23 × 6.8 m, was built partly over the foundations of the granary and partly oversailing them to cover the main street (*uia principalis*) of the fort. At this time, the gateway at the end of the street (visible beyond the hall) had been blocked, and it has been suggested that the hall was deliberately sited in this way so that the now disused gateway could provide an imposing backdrop (Wilmott (2001), pp. 121–2).

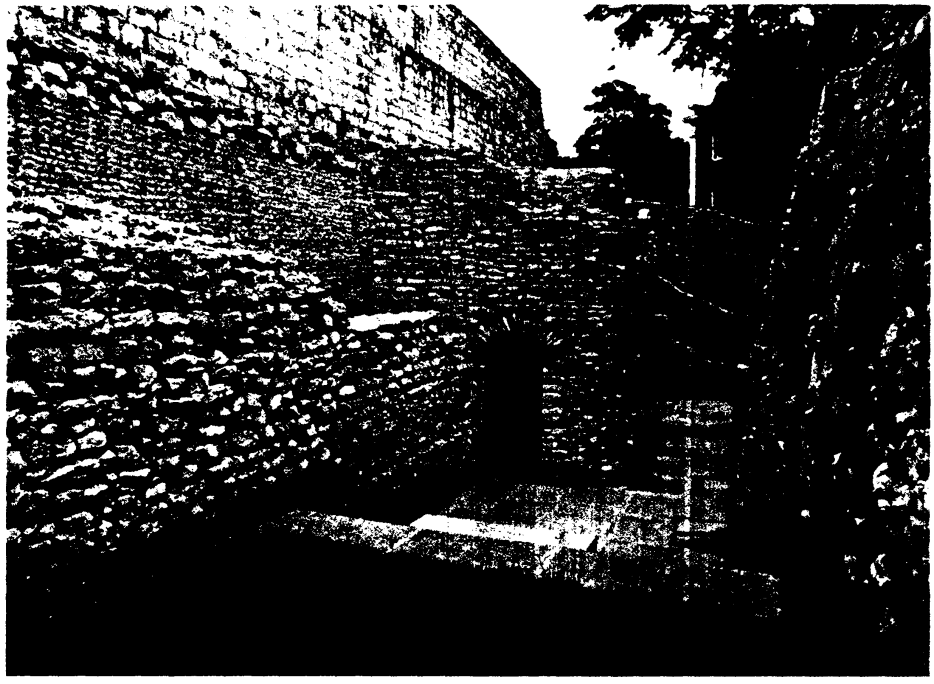


ILLUSTRATION 4 York, north-west side of the fortifications, the 'Anglian' tower (tower 19)
The rubble-built wall on the left is the core of the Roman wall of the legionary fortress, from which the ashlar facing stones have been robbed at some period. The 'Anglian' tower is the small, rectangular building with the round-arched opening. Its construction is quite different from that of the Roman wall, both in the stone used and in the masonry, which is laid in coursed rubble rather than the ashlar facing with a rubble core of the Roman wall. The opening with its voussoirs has, in conjunction with another paired one on the opposite side, been compared with the church towers of early Northumbrian churches, such as Monkwearmouth.

fifth-century construction activity at York, where the rubble-built, so-called 'Anglian' tower repairing a breach in the fortress wall may be of 'sub-Roman' date (ill. 4).[23]

Secondly, there is the archaeological evidence of the distribution of the earliest 'barbarian' graves in Yorkshire, that is those which involve cremation. At York such graves have been excavated in the Roman cemeteries at The Mount outside the walls of the Roman civilian settlement (*colonia*), and at Heworth less than a mile from the Roman fortress (map 7). The largest of

[23] On Birdoswald, Wilmott (2001), pp. 121–4; on Binchester, Ferris and Jones (2000), and on this and other sites Snyder (1998), pp. 168–73 and Snyder (1996), pp. 45–7. For the 'Anglian' tower, see Buckland (1984), and, for summary of other scholarship, Ottaway (1993), pp. 109–11.

the cemeteries at Sancton (Sancton I, Yorkshire East Riding) is strategically placed relative to the Roman roads leading south to the Roman ferry-crossing of the Humber at Brough on Humber (*Petuaria*, Yorkshire East Riding), and north to the Roman fort of Malton. The cemeteries at Londesborough (Yorkshire East Riding) and elsewhere show the same sort of relationship to Roman lines of communication. It is possible that these cemeteries were those of federates in the pay of sub-Roman authorities, whom they would eventually supplant, although the type of objects found in such cremations do not themselves provide evidence for this.[24]

Thirdly, there is evidence of the use in the kingdom of Northumbria of Roman sites and buildings, evidence which is consistent with the English having assumed power in a negotiated way from 'sub-Roman' authorities, and thus continuing to use Roman power-centres. The excavations under York Minster, occasioned by the need to consolidate that building, are potentially important in this respect. The Minster is sited more or less in the middle of the Roman legionary fortress. The excavations under the south transept revealed, as would have been expected, the remains of the Roman headquarters building (*principia*) and in particular the great basilican cross-hall on the north side of the courtyard of that building (fig. 3). The unexpected conclusion arising from the excavators' report, however, was that this cross-hall had not been abandoned at the end of the Roman period, but had continued in use until the ninth century. The cross-hall was a massive stone structure, lined with impressive columns, and it would have provided an excellent palace for the new kings of Deira and then of Northumbria (fig. 4). What more likely than that, when the Roman authorities or their 'sub-Roman' successors ceded power to the barbarian federates and mercenaries in north Britain, one group of those barbarians – the future kings of Deira – should have continued to be based in the York legionary fortress, and should have converted the cross-hall into a royal hall which they and their successors continued to use until the coming of the Vikings in the ninth century?[25]

Something similar may have happened at a Northumbrian royal vill which Bede calls *Ad Murum* ('On the Wall'), a site not now identifiable but which was possibly a Hadrian's Wall fort which had passed into the hands of the Northumbrian kings. Comparable may have been *Cambodunum*, an

[24] On the cemeteries in general, see Eagles (1979), pp. 43–6, 240–1, and, for a gazetteer, pp. 421–54. See also Lucy (1999). On York, see Edward James and Heywood (1995), p. 9, and on Sancton, Myres and Southern (1973) and Timby (1993).

[25] Phillips, Heywood and Carver (1995), pp. 64–8.

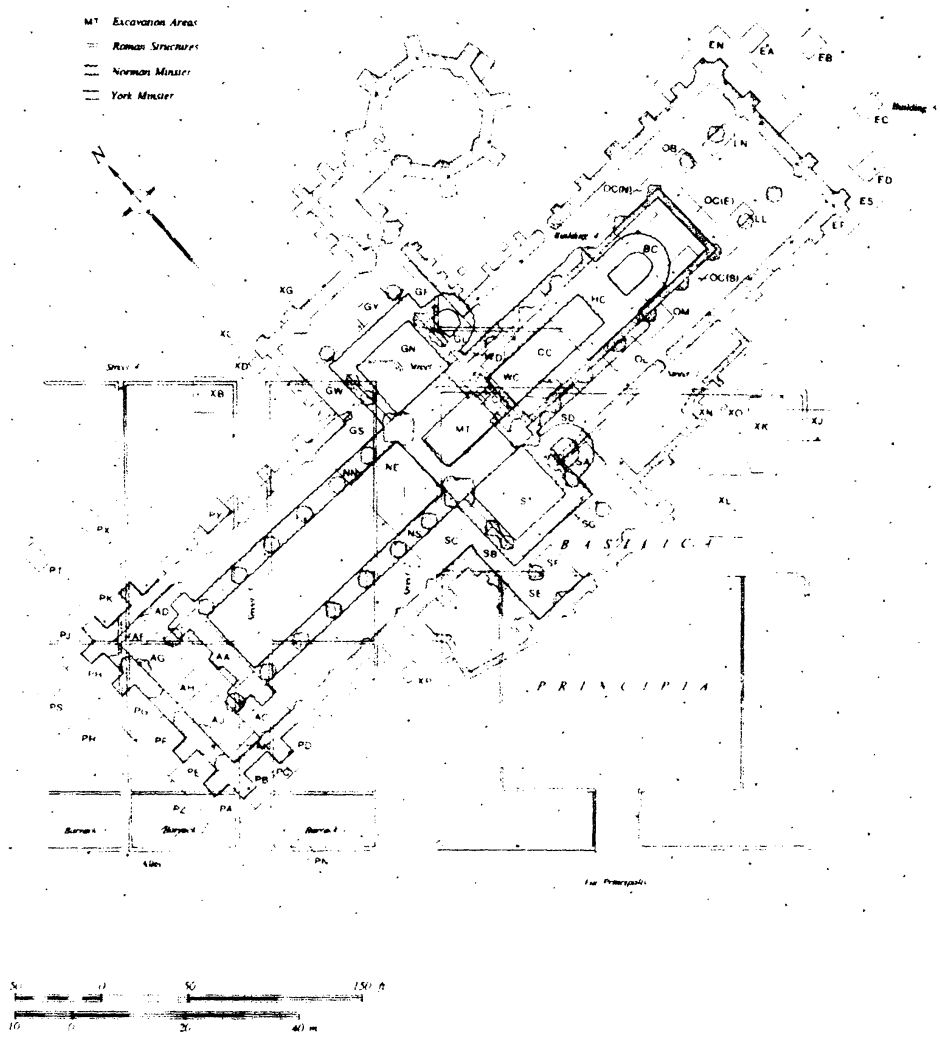



FIGURE 3 York, Roman buildings and streets beneath York Minster

unidentified Roman fort in the list of Roman sites known as the *Antonine Itinerary*. Here, Bede tells us, there was in King Edwin's day another royal vill. The persistence as a district-name of the name *Ahse*, possibly derived from that of the Hadrian's Wall fort of *Aesica*, may be explained by the existence of yet another royal vill in a former Roman fort, from which the district was governed. The discovery of fifth- and sixth-century pottery and brooches from within the Roman fort at Corbridge (Northumberland), and

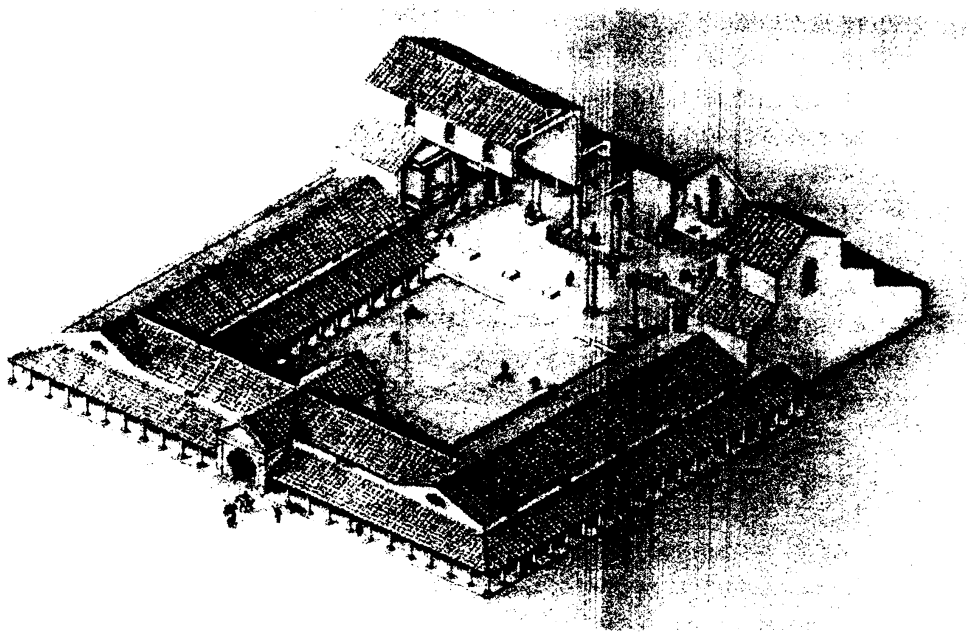


FIGURE 4 York, reconstruction of the *principia* of the Roman fortress
The cross-hall (basilica) is shown in cut-away section at the top right of the drawing.

of the sixth-century burials and artefacts from the fort at Binchester, could be interpreted to mean that these forts also continued in use as centres of Northumbrian power. Remains of barbarian-type buildings and burials of late fifth- and early sixth-century date excavated at the Roman town of Catterick suggest that the site was used by incoming English continuously until it emerged later as an important Northumbrian royal centre. Even from the Northumbrian royal fortress of Bamburgh there is evidence in the shape of archaeological remains, never fully published, which suggest that it had originally been the site of a Roman signal beacon, north of Hadrian's Wall and garrisoned by barbarians. Perhaps, pursuing our model, those barbarians had eventually assumed control, and Bamburgh as a Northumbrian royal centre developed as a result.[26]

Although the evidence surveyed above is consistent with Model 1 in so far as it involves a peaceful hand-over of power from sub-Roman authorities

[26] For *Ad Murum*, see Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 3 chs. 21–2; for *Cambodunum*, see Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 2 ch. 14, and below, pp. 86–7 nn. 47–8. On *Aesica*, see above, p. 61; for Catterick, see Cramp (1999), pp. 4–5, and P. R. Wilson, Cardwell, Cramp et al. (1996), pp. 50–4; for Bamburgh, see Hope-Taylor (1977), pp. 301–2.

to incoming English, the model is nevertheless not easy to sustain. In general terms, it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that there is no sign in Northumbria of the continuities between the Roman Empire and the barbarian kingdoms which are so apparent on the continent. Whereas Gregory of Tours's *History of the Franks* reveals a large class of Gallo-Roman bishops, like Gregory himself, and of Gallo-Roman aristocrats still occupying positions of influence in the Frankish kingdom of Gaul, there is no trace of this in our sources for Northumbria.[27] In Bede's account of the period after the end of Roman rule, we look in vain for Latin names or even Latin name-elements; there is nothing to suggest the survival of a Romano-British class as with the Gallo-Roman class in Gaul.

Moreover, the archaeological evidence is often frustratingly imprecise, or indeed ambiguous. For the cemeteries, the problem is primarily its chronological imprecision. The barbarian cemeteries located along Roman roads and near military installations could be one of two things: evidence of barbarian federates or mercenaries stationed there to guard those roads and installations (as suggested above); or evidence of the arrival and settlement of the barbarian conquerors of those roads and installations. Was Sancton I, for example, the cemetery of those who were protecting York and Malton from barbarian attacks along the Roman road from Brough on Humber? Or was it the cemetery of those who had used the Roman road as their route of invasion? Everything hinges on the date of these cemeteries. The earlier they are (i.e. the more firmly in the period when we can plausibly postulate the existence of sub-Roman rule) the more likely the first hypothesis is to be correct; the later they are (and thus the further into the post-Roman period) the more likely the latter is to reflect the truth. The only means of dating them is the typology of the cremation urns which they contain (that is the way in which the styles and designs of them developed) in comparison with urns from cemeteries from the continental homelands of the English. This is a very imprecise process, since dating chronologies on the continent as well as in England are often founded on the record of historical texts which are themselves problematic to interpret. It has been argued that the earliest 'barbarian' cemeteries such as Sancton I began in the late fourth century; but the weaknesses of the comparative dating methods applied make this seem dubious, and the earliest phases in such cemeteries are more likely to be no earlier than the mid-fifth century.

[27] See the frequency of Latin personal names in the full and clear index to Thorpe (1974); for example, Cato, Cautinus, Ecdicius, Hospicius, Injuriosus, Lupus, Modestus, Romanus.

with the majority of the cemetery evidence relating to the sixth century and later.[28]

The evidence for York is similarly subject to ambiguity. In the first place, doubt has now been cast on the notion that the cross-hall of the *principia* at York continued in use in the kingdom of Northumbria. This notion rests on a very small quantity of pottery of 'Anglian' date found on the site, and this, it is now argued, could as easily have been dropped accidentally on a ruined site as have been actively used in a building which continued fully in use.[29] In any case, the overall archaeological and historical evidence from York is little in favour of the idea that there was a smooth transition from Roman authorities to barbarian rulers there. Bede's description of what happened after the conversion to Christianity of King Edwin is instructive:

> He was baptized at York on Easter Day, 12 April [627], in the church of St Peter the Apostle, which he had hastily built of wood while he was a catechumen and under instruction before he received baptism. He established an episcopal see for Paulinus, his instructor and bishop, in the same city. Very soon after his baptism, he set about building a greater and more magnificent church of stone, under the instructions of Paulinus, in the midst of which the chapel which he had first built was to be enclosed.[30]

Assuming, as is very likely, that the church referred to here was near the site of the present York Minster, it is striking that the church which Edwin built was in the heart of the Roman fortress. This could be seen as supporting the idea that the king used the cross-hall for his residence, with the church built in its courtyard. A passage in the eighth-century *Life of Gregory the Great* can be interpreted as describing just such a setting. It refers to an event apparently shortly after Edwin's conversion involving the bishop Paulinus who had been principally responsible for converting him.

> When the king was hurrying to the church for the instruction of those who were still bound not only to paganism but also to unlawful marriages, he [Paulinus] hurried with him from the hall where they had previously been encouraging them

[28] On general issues of dating, see the illuminating comments of John Morris (1974). For the early dating of Northumbrian cemeteries, see Myres and Southern (1973), Myres (1969), pp. 74–5, and Myres (1977), pp. 121–3. On the first of these, see Kydd (1976). For more recent assessments, see Eagles (1979), pp. 82–142, and Timby (1993) who, while agreeing that Sancton I was probably in use during the fifth, sixth and possibly seventh centuries, notes that 'there is as yet no acceptable absolute chronology' (pp. 311–12). The most recently excavated inhumation cemetery, West Heslerton (Yorkshire East Riding), is assigned a date-range of *c.* 475–*c.* 650 (Haughton and Powlesland (1999), p. 81).

[29] Carver (1995), pp. 187–90.

[30] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 2 ch. 14.

[the catachumens] to amend their lives in both respects, when a crow set up a hoarse croaking from an unpropitious quarter of the sky. Thereupon the whole of the royal company, who were still in the *platea populi*, heard the bird and turned towards it, halting in amazement as if they believed that the 'new song' in the church was not to be 'praise unto God', but something false and useless. Then, while God looked down from his heaven and guided everything, the reverend bishop said to one of his youths, 'Shoot the bird down quickly with an arrow.' This was speedily done and then the bishop told him that the arrow from the bird was to be kept until the instruction of the catechumens was finished and then brought into the hall.

This story, the primary purpose of which was presumably to demonstrate the superiority of Paulinus's religion over paganism, is not explicity located in York. But if York was in fact the place where the incident was considered to have taken place, it is possible to argue that the hall (*aula*) was the cross-hall of the *principia*, and the *platea populi* was the courtyard in front of it, in which stood the church (*ecclesia*), which was the one referred to by Bede above.[31] Aside from the difficulty of whether York is meant at all, however, let us note how little support either this or the previous text really give to the idea that there was at York a relatively peaceful hand-over of power by the Roman authorities. Bede makes it clear that the church built by Edwin was a new one, made in the first instance hastily of wood. There is no suggestion of a Roman church being reused, as for example there is in Bede's account of Christ Church, Canterbury. We should not of course expect to find such a church in the fortress, but there must have been one in the civilian part of York for there was in the late Roman period a bishop of York who attended the church council of Arles in 314.[32] The most economical interpretation of the evidence set out above is that there was no real continuity between Roman York and Edwin's York, even via a postulated 'sub-Roman' phase, and York does not provide evidence for Model 1. Nor is that model required to explain why Edwin should have wished to use York. Pope Gregory the Great had explicitly instructed Augustine, the leader of his mission to England, that York should be the site of a metropolitan see; and Edwin's mentor Paulinus was a member of that mission.[33]

The archaeological evidence from other Roman sites is in general too fragmentary and sporadic to be anything but equivocal. What does it mean that

[31] *Sources*, pp. 127–9 (A.2.1 = *Life Greg.*, ch. 15 (pp. 96–9)).

[32] On Canterbury, see Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 33: 'a church which, as he was informed, had been built in ancient times by the hands of Roman believers'. For the bishop of York, see below, p. 111.

[33] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 29.

the only very loosely dated post-Roman structures at Birdoswald are on the site of the granaries? Was this the most convenient place on the fort for some 'sub-Roman' official or a barbarian mercenary warlord to whom the Roman authorities had ceded power to build a new headquarters? Or are we seeing simply re-use of a convenient site without any real continuity with its former Roman use? Are the buildings and other remains at Catterick early enough to indicate any sort of hand-over by Roman authorities (dating evidence has recently been revised to the sixth rather than the fifth century)?[34] It is in this connection instructive that certain of the finds of barbarian material in Roman forts are of burials within them, as at Binchester where the English burials have been recovered from the headquarters building itself. Is this really continuity of usage or some sort of quite unconnected expediency? Burials in such situations would have been unthinkable in the Roman period, when the dead were placed in extramural cemeteries and thus strictly segregated from the living. As for *Cambodunum* and *Ad Murum*, it seems likely that Northumbrian kings, in common with other barbarian kings, wanted to be thought of as imitators of the Roman Empire just as, Bede tells us, King Edwin had a standard which Bede (and probably Edwin too) thought was a typically Roman standard called a *tufa*.[35] Whether they were right or not in this belief, the aspiration was clear enough; and it was precisely such an aspiration which might have led an ambitious Northumbrian king to re-use a Roman fort long after any connection with Roman organization had been lost.

The evidence for a 'sub-Roman' phase succeeding Roman Britain proper is itself open to serious question at least in the area which was to become Northumbria. The evidence we have surveyed proves little more than that there was continuing activity of some sort at certain Roman sites. There is little to suggest that this was 'sub-Roman' activity involving, for example, continued use of Roman buildings for the same sort of purposes for which they were constructed. There is also a notable scarcity of evidence for continuing Roman culture in the fifth century and beyond, which might be an indicator of 'sub-Roman' activity. Nor is there very convincing evidence for the survival in Northumbria of Roman units of government which might have been preserved by 'sub-Roman' authorities, handed over to the Northumbrian rulers and so preserved at least in attenuated form. Attempts have been made to equate the Roman *ciuitas* of the Brigantes with Bernicia, but considerable violence to the testimony of Roman authors is required

[34] P. R. Wilson, Cardwell, Cramp et al. (1996), p. 51.
[35] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 2 ch. 16; see Bruce-Mitford (1974), pp. 7–17.

to achieve this. It has also been suggested that the Roman *ciuitas* of the *Caruetii* in north-west England had an after-life in a shadowy Cumbrian kingdom, as reflected in the continued existence of the Roman centre of Carlisle (*Luguuallium*), known as *Lugubalia* or *Luel* in Northumbrian sources. This is possible, but it cannot be proved. Carlisle is a very strategic site on a number of routeways, and its importance in the Northumbrian kingdom need not have derived from any continuity via a 'sub-Roman' phase. The story told by Bede of St Cuthbert being shown the Roman walls and a Roman fountain at Carlisle by the 'citizens' (*ciues*) need indicate no more than that Roman remains were still visible in Carlisle, and were an object of interest then as now. The fullest archaeological evidence – that from Birdoswald – suggests discontinuity of function since it envisages the conversion of granaries into residential or meeting halls, even if there was no interval of time between Roman use of the granaries as such and what succeeded it.[36]

The evidence for a 'sub-Roman' phase north of Hadrian's Wall is even more nugatory. The existence of such a phase has been argued for the British kingdom of Strathclyde in what is now south-east Scotland on the grounds that the genealogy of its kings contains names, notably a certain Paternus 'of the Red Robe', which have been held to show that its rulers adopted Latin names and Roman costume, and that the kingdom was therefore the product of Roman influence or even Roman political intervention in creating it as a buffer state.[37] The evidence is late; the inference seems strained in the extreme; and it is in no way supported by other evidence of activity which can definitely be identified as 'sub-Roman' in Strathclyde or other areas. A hoard of Roman silver from the British fort of Traprain Law near Dunbar might indicate that the lord of the fort favoured Roman silver and was therefore behaving in a 'sub-Roman' way; but it could as well have been the result of plunder or of tribute payment by the Roman authorities, and in any case it appears to date to the latter part of the fourth century and is thus too early to cast light on the end of Roman Britain.[38] It is very hard, therefore, to see how Model 1 can apply at all north of Hadrian's Wall.

The idea behind Model 2, which postulates a transition by more or less peaceful means from distinctively native British kingdoms to Northumbrian rulers, rather than directly or indirectly from the Roman Empire, has been

[36] On the Brigantes, see Dark (1994), p. 74; cf. Rivet and Smith (1979), entry 'Brigantes'; and on Carlisle, see Phythian-Adams (1996), pp. 62–4, and, for archaeological evidence of post-Roman activity there, McCarthy (2002), pp. 134–9; for the texts, Anon., *Life Cuth.*, bk 4 ch. 8, and Bede, *Life Cuth.*, ch. 27. On Birdoswald, see above, pp. 70, 71.

[37] Peter Hunter Blair (1947), pp. 28–9; cf. Dumville (1989a), p. 216.

[38] Armit (1997), pp. 116–17; for the treasure, see Curle (1923).

influenced by archaeological research on south-west and west Britain. This has revealed the re-use in the post-Roman period within Roman Britain of native British fortresses, such as South Cadbury or Cadbury Congresbury in Somerset, or Dinas Powys and Castell Degannwy in Wales. This can be interpreted as indicating the resurgence of British political organization, presumably British kingdoms, following the end of Roman rule (the British population in effect 'going native') within the former Roman Empire.[39]

The evidence which can be adduced for the applicability of this model to Northumbria is wide-ranging, though very problematic to evaluate. There is some evidence to suggest that Deira and Bernicia, the two original constituent kingdoms of Northumbria, were British kingdoms taken over as going concerns by an incoming English elite as Model 2 postulates. In the case of Deira, all we really have to go on is the name, which is certainly not an English one, and may be British although its meaning is unclear. The name Bernicia seems to be British, even if it does not refer to the British tribe of the Brigantes (as was once supposed) but means something like 'land of mountain passes'. There is, however, rather more to say about this kingdom, or at least about the parts of it north of Hadrian's Wall. First, it is very striking that several of the important centres in it appear, to judge from the earliest forms of their names, to have been of British origin. Bamburgh had a British name, *Din Guaire*, in Nennius's account and may well have been of British origin. Coldingham, site of a Northumbrian monastery, is called by Bede *Coludi urbs*. Since Colud is a British name, this suggests that Coldingham too was originally a British centre taken over by the Bernicians, most likely the hill-fort on St Abb's Head, rather than the site of the modern village of Coldingham. King Ecgfrith's prefect imprisoned Bishop Wilfrid at a royal centre in Dunbar, which also has a British name (*Dinbaer*) and was almost certainly in origin a British fort defending the promontory on which modern Dunbar stands. Possibly it was associated with the remains excavated on the nearby site of Old Dunbar (Doon Hill) of a chieftain's residence of post-Roman date, built in a way strongly suggestive of British styles, and then replaced by a residence of more Northumbrian style, suggesting just the sort of take-over we are postulating. Another of the king's prefects imprisoned Bishop Wilfrid at *Inbroninis*, another place with a British name, although we do not know where it was.[40]

[39] Alcock (1971), pp. 209–29; on South Cadbury, see Alcock, Stevenson and Musson (1995).

[40] For the names Deira and Bernicia, see Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 3 ch. 1, and, for comment, Jackson (1953), pp. 419–20, 701–5. For the sites referred to see Alcock (1989) and, on Doon Hill specifically, David M. Wilson and Hurst (1966) and Hope-Taylor (1983). See also Snyder (1996), p. 46; and, for

Further south within Bernicia, the most striking evidence in support of Model 2 is provided by two juxtaposed archaeological sites at Yeavering. The first is a massive hill-fort crowning the steep outlier of the Cheviot Hills called Yeavering Bell, a major fortified centre or *oppidum* as Roman writers might have called it, with considerable evidence of occupation within it in the form of hut-circles (ill. 5). This fort, which is of pre-Roman Iron Age date (early first century AD), was very probably a political centre of some importance for the surrounding region. Since we find a high density of rural settlements of broadly Roman date distributed around it, that importance is likely to have continued through the Roman period. The second site is a complex of timber buildings, discovered by aerial photography and then excavated, on a low gravel ridge above the River Glen at the foot of Yeavering Bell (fig. 5). Beginning as a religious site and a cemetery, this second site developed in various stages into a substantial complex of halls and other buildings, and was almost certainly the place referred to by Bede in connection with the preaching of Paulinus:

> So great is said to have been the fervour of the faith of the Northumbrians and their longing for the washing of salvation, that once when Paulinus came to the king and queen in their royal vill (*uillam regiam*) at Yeavering (*Adgefrin*), he spent thirty-six days there occupied in the task of catechizing and baptizing.[41]

Bede goes on to describe Paulinus baptizing in the River Glen 'which was close at hand', which tends to confirm the identification. As we might expect in a period when we have virtually no coin evidence to help us, the dating of the phases of the site as revealed archaeologically is difficult to establish; but it does look as if the earliest belong to the period before there was any possibility of Bernicia having existed and therefore relate to some British rather than Northumbrian activity. Moreover, the name-form used in Bede's account is of very considerable interest. The Latin prefix *Ad-* should be disregarded in that it appears to be a translation of the standard Old English prefix *Æt-* meaning 'at the' (as in the Old English version of Bede, *Ætgefrin*), but in the context of place-names having little precise

the view that the earlier hall may in fact be prehistoric, Ian Mervin Smith (1991), p. 267. For St Abb's Head, see Alcock, Alcock and Foster (1986). For the texts, see Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 61 (Bamburgh); Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 4 ch. 19 (17) (Coldingham); Stephen, *Life Wilf.*, ch. 38 (Dunbar) and ch. 36 (*Inbroninis*; for a speculative identification of this place with Lindisfarne, see G. J. R. Jones (1990)). Lindisfarne had a British name, *Metcaud*, although we cannot be sure that the English ever used it (Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 63 (*Metcaud*)). There is no evidence for Deira being a British kingdom centred on York and under the rule of King Coel Hen, the ancestor of several of the lines of northern British kings recorded in the Welsh geneaologies (Peter Hunter Blair (1947), pp. 45–8).

[41] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 2 ch. 14.

ILLUSTRATION 5 Yeavering Bell (Northumberland) from the air, looking north
The rampart of the hill-fort, which consists of a massive wall of tumbled rocks, is clearly visible, with indentations indicating the sites of dwellings within it. The palace site lies beyond, between the two woods at the foot of the Bell. The farthest wood occupies a steep site dropping down to the River Glen beyond.

significance. Thus the name of Yeavering was for Bede *Gefrin*, which evolved over the centuries into *Yever* in 1242, *Yeure* in 1329 and so to Yeavering. This shows that although at first glance Yeavering might appear to be an English name in its modern form (with an *-ing* ending as in Sonning on the River Thames), it is in fact a British one, derived from British *gafr* meaning 'goat', probably in combination with British *bryn*, meaning hill.

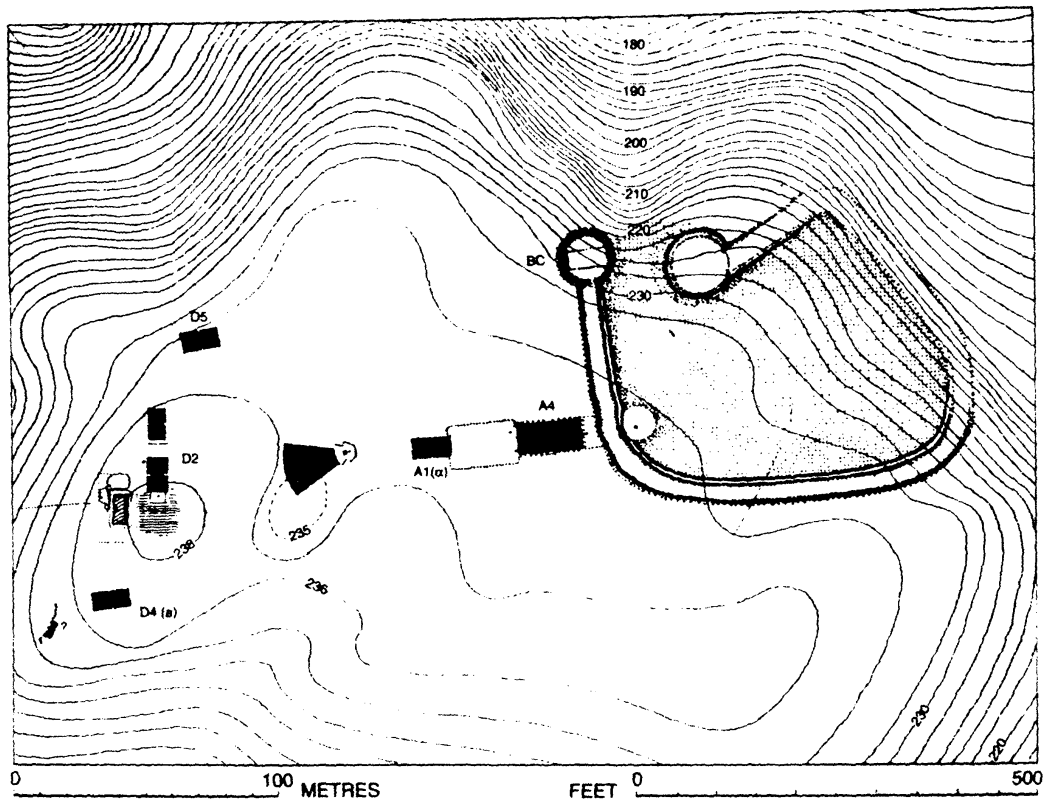



FIGURE 5 Yeavering (Northumberland), palace site, post-Roman Phase IIIc buildings and earthworks (from Hope-Taylor (1977), fig. 77)
This phase of the palace-site's development has been tentatively assigned to the reign of Edwin, with evidence for its destruction by fire being associated with the invasion and attacks of King Cædwalla of Gwynedd. On the right, the earthwork known as the Great Enclosure served either as a defence or as a cattle corral; and building A4 is a grand timber hall on a large scale. The quadrant building has been interpreted as a sort of amphitheatre, perhaps for the king to address his people; building D2 has been interpreted as a temple converted into a Christian church (Hope-Taylor (1977), pp. 277–8).

Thus the name in Bede's time meant 'hill of the goats'. So *Gefrin* cannot have referred in origin to the gravel ridge at the base of Yeavering Bell; it must have referred to Yeavering Bell itself and must have been the name not of the site on the gravel ridge but of the hill-fort. In short, Edwin's royal vill, where Paulinus preached, had a name derived from a British political centre, and seems very likely to have originated as a British site. Indeed some of the building techniques observable in the timber buildings at Yeavering have been interpreted as British in character, as has

the probably fortified enclosure at the east end of the site, the bulbous mounds at the entrance to which are characteristic of forts in British areas. The royal vill which Bede says succeeded to Yeavering, that is Milfield (*Mælmin*), can similarly be interpreted as British in character, for it too has a British name and appears to have remains notably similar to those of Yeavering.[42]

The evidence set out here for sites in the heartlands of Bernicia has been used to argue, in line with Model 2, that the formation of Bernicia consisted of the peaceful take-over by an incoming English elite of a British kingdom, of which Yeavering was one of the centres, or perhaps the principal centre. According to this interpretation, the chronology and the character of Yeavering make it impossible to believe that the Northumbrians could have established themselves there in the interior of Northumbria so early in any other way. The incoming Anglo-Saxons initially acted as warlords for the native British and assumed political power because it was in everyone's interests for this to happen.[43] These arguments have some plausibility, but are weakened by the lack of evidence for the British kingdoms which are supposed to have lain behind Bernicia and Deira.

Evidence can be adduced for the existence of other British kingdoms. The most unequivocal reference, which is in the section on northern history in Nennius's *History of the Britons*, refers to a kingdom called Elmet: according to this King Edwin (616–33) 'occupied Elmet and expelled Ceretic (*Certic*), king of that country'. This account finds some corroboration in a passing reference in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, according to which Hereric, the father of St Hild of Whitby, himself a member of the Deiran royal family, was killed at the court of King Ceretic (*Cerdic*), and presumably this was the same king mentioned by Nennius. The two events may even have been linked – maybe Edwin invaded Elmet because Hereric had been poisoned by his hosts there; or maybe Edwin himself had Hereric poisoned because he was a dissident member of the Deiran royal house in exile, and then invaded Elmet to punish Ceretic for harbouring such an exile.[44]

[42] For the name Yeavering, see Hope-Taylor (1977), pp. 15–16, and, for the excavated features, pp. 205–39; see also entry 'Yeavering' in Ekwall (1960) and Mawer (1920) ('clearly a Celtic name'). For Milfield, see Hope-Taylor (1977), pp. 13, 276–7, and for a more up-to-date plan and evidence for the characteristic 'barbarian' houses known as Grubenhäuser on the site, see Gates and O'Brien (1988). The possibility that the buildings at Yeavering were in fact part of a hybrid English–British tradition is discussed by Simon James, Marshall and Millett (1984).

[43] Hope-Taylor (1977), pp. 276–324. A similar argument for Sprouston, another site discovered by aerial photography nearby on the River Tweed, is proposed by Ian Mervin Smith (1991), p. 285.

[44] Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 63 ('occupauit Elmet, et expulit Certic, regem illius regionis'), and Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 4 ch. 23 (21).

Elmet and Ceretic are British names, so it is certainly possible that we are dealing with a post-Roman British kingdom, and one which, if we can so interpret an inscription erected in North Wales to a certain Aliortus of Elmet, had connections with the North Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd.[45] It is possible too that the inhabitants of this kingdom, or at least their descendants, were the *Elmed sætna* who figure in the list of peoples called the Tribal Hidage.[46] A possible clue to the location of Elmet is provided by Bede in the following passage:

> In *Cambodunum* where there was also a royal dwelling (*uilla regia*), he [Paulinus] built a church which was afterwards burnt down, together with the whole of the buildings, by the heathen who slew King Edwin. In its place, later kings built a dwelling for themselves in the region (*regio*) known as *Loidis*. The altar escaped from the fire because it was of stone, and is still preserved in the monastery of the most reverend abbot and priest Thrythwulf, which is in the forest of Elmet.[47]

The region of *Loidis* has a British name, related to modern Leeds, as well as to the nearby place called Ledsham (Yorkshire West Riding). *Cambodunum* can be interpreted as a lost fort in this area. Assuming that the altar was heavy and so unlikely to have been transported far, we can suppose that Thrythwulf's otherwise unknown monastery was nearby, thus locating Elmet in the vicinity of Leeds. This is confirmed by the survival of place-names containing the name Elmet in the same area: Sherburn in Elmet, Barwick in Elmet and so on. It is not certain, however, that these names really preserve the memory of a kingdom of Elmet. In the passage quoted above, Bede refers to Elmet as the name of a forest; he actually makes no mention of its being the name of a kingdom. So the place-names could refer to a lost Forest of Elmet; the association of the name Elmet with the putative kingdom is solely due to Nennius. Identifying other kings of this kingdom is a speculative business. There is a king called Gwallawg who appears earlier in the same paragraph from the *History of the Britons* already quoted; he is conceivably to be associated with Elmet because the British bard Taliesin speaks of him attacking nearby York – but then the same poem credits him with battles over a much wider geographical area. A warrior called Madog of Elmet (*Elfed*) appears in *The Gododdin*, but the association with the Elmet we are discussing is not certain, nor is there any indication that this person was a king. In short, Nennius may have made an association between Ceretic

[45] G. J. R. Jones (1975), pp. 3–4. The inscription is Nash-Williams (1950), no. 87 (p. 88).
[46] See below, pp. 39–40; see also G. J. R. Jones (1975), pp. 13–14.
[47] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 2 ch. 14.

and Elmet which was well founded; or he may have confused a forest name as that of a kingdom and created an imaginary kingdom of Elmet. Even if we accept Nennius's testimony, we have no way of ascertaining how far beyond the region of *Loidis* the putative kingdom extended. Brave attempts have been made to use linear earthworks and the putative boundaries of the supposedly British kingdom of Craven to the west to reconstruct them; but any certainty is impossible – the earthworks are largely undated, and the only evidence for the existence of a British kingdom of Craven is provided by later documents. These refer to a district of unknown origin, which may not have been a kingdom at all, although it admittedly had a British name.[48]

To the north-west of *Loidis* scholars have located a post-Roman British kingdom called Rheged, the existence of which is even more shadowy. The name is not mentioned by Bede or any other English writer. Even Nennius makes no mention of it, although he does refer to a king called Urien (the name is British), a figure who is usually identified with the hero of many of the poems of Taliesin, describing in eulogistic style a series of campaigns fought by Urien, who is there referred to as 'lord of Rheged'. On the strength of this, one of the later Welsh genealogies of the 'Men of the North' in which Urien's name appears is assumed to have been the genealogy of the putative kingdom of Rheged. Neither the poems nor the genealogy can be regarded as sober factual sources, and it is hard to know what to make of their testimony. Nor are we on any firmer ground as regards the extent of the kingdom. Taliesin's poems point us towards Wensleydale (Yorkshire West Riding), identified by modern scholars with *Gwaith Gwenystrad* where Urien is said to have won a victory, and Catterick, identified with *Catraeth* of which Urien is said to have been lord. Place-names supposedly incorporating the name Rheged have also been pressed into service: the claim that Dunragit in Galloway means 'The Fort of Rheged' has led to the view that the kingdom extended right along the north coast of the Solway Firth, even though the site of Dunragit (admittedly a fortified one) has yielded no corroborating evidence. Rochdale (Lancashire) may also incorporate the name, but this is highly doubtful; the name may equally be English meaning 'the valley of the Roch', and even if it is British it may mean simply 'district or river opposite to the forest'. Because of its strategic position and its Roman origins, Carlisle is sometimes considered to have been the centre of Rheged. It was evidently

[48] On Elmet in general, see Faull and Moorhouse (1981), I, pp. 157–63 and 171–8; on *Cambodunum*, see Rivet and Smith (1979), pp. 292–3; on the forest names, see Hind (1980). For the poems, see Taliesin, *Poems*, 'The Battles of Gwallawg' (Pennar (1988), pp. 107–12), and Aneirin, *Gododdin*, B.22. On Craven, see P. N. Wood (1996), where interesting parallels with other British kingdoms are drawn.

an inhabited and important place when St Cuthbert visited it in the late seventh century to see the queen, but there is no proof that it was in any way a political centre.[49]

Speculative as all this is, however, there is one point of slightly greater solidity in Nennius's statement that the first wife of King Oswiu of the Northumbrians was 'Rieinmellt, daughter of Royth, son of Rhun', this last being identified by Nennius as 'son of Urien', king of Rheged. The fact of the marriage finds some corroboration in the occurrence of the name Rieinmellt (*Raegnmaeld*), a highly unusual one in an English context, in the list of queens who were remembered in the ninth-century *Liber Vitae* ('Book of Life') usually assigned to the church of Lindisfarne. If there really was a marriage between Oswiu and a British princess, and if that princess really was a daughter of the ruling house of Rheged, we may here have evidence of one of the ways in which a British kingdom was taken over as a going concern by the Northumbrian kings. Indeed, it has been argued that the account of Oswiu's two marriages, first to Rieinmellt, then to the Deiran princess Eanflæd, 'lies at the very heart' of Nennius's *History of the Britons* and emphasizes Oswiu's role in uniting Rheged to Northumbria. It has been further argued that a line of sub-kings ruled the former kingdom of Rheged as a Northumbrian sub-kingdom, retaining a strong British identity. These kings may, it is argued, have belonged to a subsidiary line of the Bernician royal house, specifically the five generations of descent from King Ecgfrith of Northumbria which the genealogies preserved by Nennius represent as culminating in an otherwise unknown Oslaf. The argument is an alluring one, but the evidence is slim – for all we know, Rieinmellt might have been enslaved and forcibly married to Oswiu following the destruction of the kingdom of Rheged. Equally problematic is Nennius's statement that King Edwin of the Northumbrians was baptized by Rhun son of Urien, a statement which was clumsily glossed in the text at some unknown period to bring it into line with Bede's unequivocal account of the baptism of Edwin by Paulinus who had come from Kent. Attempts have been made to reconcile Nennius's account and Bede's but, if there was any reality behind Nennius's account, it is very difficult to be sure what it was.[50]

More shadowy still is the kingdom of the Gododdin, supposedly centred on Edinburgh and thus in the area into which Northumbria ultimately

[49] On Aneirin and Taliesin, see Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 62, and Taliesin, *Poems*, 'The Battle of Wensleydale'; for the genealogy, see Miller (1975), p. 265. On Dunragit, see Alcock (1987), pp. 236, 238, and on Rochdale, Ekwall (1960), entry 'Rochdale'.

[50] Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 57; see below, p. 121. For the *Liber Vitae*, see Gerchow (1988), p. 304.

expanded northwards to the Firth of Forth. The only early mention of this kingdom is in the long poem named after its people: *The Gododdin* attributed to the British bard Aneirin, which through a series of eulogies of fallen warriors tells the story of a battle at a place called *Catraeth*, identified with Catterick. The participants, who are represented as having been drawn from various areas of Britain as well as from the people of the Gododdin, set out from *Din Eidyn*, a place identified with Edinburgh. This latter piece of information is what has led scholars to regard Edinburgh as the centre of the kingdom of the Gododdin, the name of which is apparently derived from the Latin name *Votadini*, assigned by the first-century Roman geographer Ptolemy to a British tribe located between the Firth of Forth and either the River Wear or the River Tyne. Northumbria's absorption of the area north to the Firth of Forth is utterly obscure, never being mentioned explicitly by any writer. All we have to go on are two words under the year 638 in the *Annals of Ulster*, a point at which they incorporate other Northern Annals perhaps from the monastery of Iona: *obsesio Etin* ('siege of Edinburgh'), without any reference to the identity of either besiegers or besieged. It is on this slender basis that modern accounts of how King Oswald of the Northumbrians besieged Edinburgh in 638, destroying the kingdom of the Gododdin and absorbing its territory, have been based.[51]

Model 2 remains a plausible way of envisaging the development of Northumbria, but the paucity of evidence relating to the British kingdoms which are central to it makes it difficult to establish it with any degree of certainty. That there were several British kingdoms of some sort in the period after the end of Roman Britain is likely but not provable, except perhaps in the case of Elmet, and certainly in the case of Strathclyde which remained a neighbour of Northumbria.[52] There was presumably some sort of relationship between certain of these kingdoms and the expanding Northumbria which accounts for the take-over of apparently British centres; but we cannot prove that this was by the sort of peaceful, agreed means that Model 2 postulates. It might as easily have been the result of violent conquest.

We may make more progress towards evaluating Models 1 and 2, however, if we turn our attention to one of their general implications: that, whether the transition from Roman Britain to Northumbria was from sub-Roman or British political structures, that transition was sufficiently peaceful as to permit the survival of the basic agrarian organization of the native British

[51] Kirby (1974a), pp. 1, 7; Jackson (1959); on the name, see Rivet and Smith (1979), pp. 508–9. For the sources, see Aneirin, *Gododdin*, and *Annals Ulster*, s.a. 638.

[52] Kirby (1962), p. 91; see also above, p. 85 n. 44.

population, and by inference of that population itself. The principal proof adduced by scholars to establish this is that of the organization of the land in Northumbria as it is revealed in much later sources: *Domesday Book*, for the lands south of the Tees; two tenth- and eleventh-century records of the lands of the church of York; the *History of St Cuthbert* of the eleventh century and *Boldon Book* (the survey of the lands of the bishop of Durham made in 1183) for lands associated with the church of Durham; and later manorial records.[53] Let us look for a moment at the entry from *Boldon Book* which concerns West Auckland (County Durham), which begins:

> In West Auckland there are 18 villeins who hold 21 bovates, and pay from each bovate 5s, and provide from each bovate in the autumn 2 men a week for mowing and raking the whole meadow, and they prepare the hay and lead it away and at that time they have subsistence once, they lead corn for 2 days, and they render 22 hens, 180 eggs and 1 cow for metreth (*uaccam de meteride*) and they cart loads between Tyne and Tees... Elstan the dreng held 4 bovates, and pays 10s, and does 4 obligatory days in the autumn with all his men except his own household, and ploughs and harrows 2 acres and will go on missions for the bishop between Tyne and Tees.[54]

The services listed here, which are characteristic of those noted in the other documents mentioned above, are notably light in comparison with services recorded elsewhere in England. They do not, for example, involve large amounts of weekly work on the lord's demesne, being generally restricted to harvest duties. They also include services which are arguably appropriate to men higher up the social scale than villeins (dependent peasants). Carrying and messenger services seem more in line with freemen than with villeins, and are reminiscent, for example, of those imposed on that intermediate social class, the radknights of eleventh-century southern England. In short, it has been argued that the men who appear in these documents were not in origin villeins, but rather free subjects of the kings who had been depressed to the level of dependants, while still retaining indications of their former more elevated position.

The presumed significance of this emerges more clearly if we examine the end of this entry which reads:

[53] *Domesday Book*; Robertson (1956), nos. LIV (statement by Oswald, archbishop of York, regarding church lands in Northumbria) and LXXXIV (types of tenure among church lands in Northumbria); *Hist. Cuth.*; and *Boldon Book*.

[54] *Boldon Book*, p. 37.

> All the villeins of Aucklandshire, that is North (Bishop) Auckland and West Auckland and Escomb and Newton Cap, provide 1 rope at the Great Chases of the bishop for each bovate and make the hall of the bishop in the forest 60ft. in length and in width within the posts 16 ft with butchering facilities and a store-house and a chamber and a privy. Moreover they make a chapel 40ft. in length and 15ft. in width, and they have 2s as a favour and they make their part of the enclosure around the lodges and on the bishop's departure a full barrel of ale or half if he should remain away. And they look after the hawk eyries in the bailiwick of Ralph the Crafty and they make 18 booths at St Cuthbert's Fair. Moreover all the villeins and leaseholders go on the roe-hunt on the summons of the bishop and to the working of the mills of Aucklandshire.

This passage, which is also characteristic of our documents, shows that West Auckland was part of a wider area: Aucklandshire, which contained a number of vills. *Domesday Book* records similar structures in Yorkshire: estates consisting of a series of subordinate vills ('berewicks' or 'sokelands') dependent on a main vill. Such estates, sometimes termed 'multiple estates' by modern scholars, were clearly cognate to Aucklandshire and the other 'shires' described by *Boldon Book*. Given the evidence for the relative freedom of the inhabitants of these estates, provided not only by the sources considered here but also by later manorial records, it has been possible to argue that 'multiple estates' or shires were in origin administrative units in the hands of the kings, and that the people who appear as villeins in the eleventh century and later were the descendants of the free inhabitants.[55]

The full significance of this for the present discussion emerges if we ask, what were the origins of these arrangements? It has been argued that they lay in the British past, and that essentially for three reasons. First, certain of the estate centres have British names (Auckland is a case in point) or are known to have been important places before the emergence of Northumbria (Aldborough in Yorkshire West Riding, for example, which was a Roman town), and this has been held to suggest that the estates attached to them were therefore of pre-Northumbrian origin.[56] Secondly, some of the dues referred to in the documents could be British in origin. Thus *metreth*, found in the Auckland entry, appears to be a British word; and another due found in the documents, a cattle tax called 'cornage and hornage', can be compared with cattle taxes in medieval Wales. In this

[55] The crucial work is Jolliffe (1926), developed in a series of studies by G. J. R. Jones, for example, G. J. R. Jones (1979). On Aucklandshire, see Roberts (1977), pp. 13–18.

[56] On Auckland, see above, p. 61 n. 9; and, on Aldborough, G. J. R. Jones (1979), pp. 29–32.

connection, it is urged that the specialized duties imposed on the inhabitants of the estates (building the bishop's hall in the example quoted above) reflect duties imposed on the king's tenants in the medieval Welsh laws, and are therefore of British origin, having survived in parallel in Northumbria and in Wales. Thirdly, 'multiple estates' are held to have once occurred very widely throughout England and southern Scotland when those areas were in British hands, and this is held to be only explicable if they were in origin the common base of British organization, preserved at first universally, then altered to the manorial system in the south and the midlands, but preserved to a large extent in Northumbria. Moreover, it is argued that this British origin of multiple estates is corroborated by parallels between them and estates documented in the high medieval laws of Wales.[57]

If these arguments are correct, we must envisage that British influence on Northumbria was deep at the level of the organization of the land. But are the arguments correct? An answer to this question depends to a large extent on how we are prepared to evaluate the evidence presented. There certainly were similarities between Northumbrian estates as represented in eleventh-century and later documents and those of Wales, and of other parts of England at an earlier date. But it is not certain that these similarities were so specific as to justify the hypothesis that all had a common origin in the pre-English, British past. Nor is it clear that the services, such as the construction of the bishop's hall for the great hunt (in origin, so the argument goes, the king's hall) were really characteristic of that British past. In the case of the construction of a hall for the great hunt, for example, it is just as arguable that it was a newly imposed service arising out of the development of hunting and hunting forests in post-Conquest England. It does not follow moreover that the use of estate centres known to have been important in Roman times proves that the estates attached to them had retained their framework of organization unchanged. The absence of week-work for the villeins may prove not that they were the descendants of free citizens but merely that demesne working, with its attendant demands for week-work, had become more important in the south and midlands than it had in Northumbria. Setting aside the difficulty of imagining continuity over such long and turbulent periods as the arguments examined here require, these concerns suggest that the evidence of agrarian organization

[57] Jolliffe (1926), pp. 40–1; G. J. R. Jones (1979), pp. 9–18; and Geoffrey W. S. Barrow (1973b).

adduced in favour of Models 1 and 2 is equivocal, or at least not of a type which compels its acceptance.[58]

Finally, then, we turn to Model 3 which postulates violent conquest of the area of Northumbria by incoming English with consequent destruction or degradation of the existing British population and removal of their organizational structures. Unlike Models 1 and 2, this model can claim no plausibility by reference to developments elsewhere in the Roman Empire where scholars have increasingly interpreted the process by which the provinces of that Empire became barbarian kingdoms as one of seamless transformation. In particular, it is argued, the nature of the Roman frontiers, with Roman economic and political activity extending well beyond them, had led to the erosion of distinctions between those dwelling on either side of them, so that the resulting difficulty of distinguishing between Romans and barbarians made the transformation all the easier.[59] Northumbria, however, may have been different from other areas of the Roman Empire, and we should therefore not dismiss Model 3 out of hand.

The evidence can be marshalled as follows. First, we have the evidence of language as reviewed above. The Englishness of Northumbria in this respect could, as we noted, be the result of British assuming English language under the influence of a dominant English-speaking elite; but the widespread and often near-complete character of the change to English is at least not inconsistent with Model 3, although the place-name evidence does require us to qualify this to the extent that some of the British population survived in Northumbria at some social level.[60]

Secondly, the archaeological evidence. The archaeology of the small number of rural settlement sites which have been excavated in Northumbria has been held to have provided some evidence of possible continuity of British population: in particular West Heslerton in the Yorkshire Wolds where the fact that the settlement appears to have been focused on a Roman shrine has been held to demonstrate its British origins; and the area of Driffield at the eastern extremity of the Vale of Pickering, where the evidence of the continuing importance of iron-working sites through the Roman and post-Roman periods is held to demonstrate continuity of settlement. This evidence,

[58] For judicious criticism of scholarship relating to multiple estates and exploration of their complexity and diversity, see Hadley (2000), pp. 94–164; Kapelle (1979), pp. 50–85; and Dark (1994), pp. 148–51. On forests, see the suggestive comments of Cox (1905), p. 97.

[59] Whittaker (1994), pp. 233–9; see also Isaac (1992), pp. 372–418.

[60] See above, pp. 60–1, 63–4.

however, is ambiguous and limited. So too is that from the excavations at the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy in the Yorkshire Wolds; the site seems certainly to have continued in use from the Roman period onwards, but with such radical re-organization, and with a possible interruption in use following the Roman period, that it is hard to see that any real continuity is involved. At Cottam in the Vale of York evidence for two successive layouts of the village and its fields has been found; the first (Cottam A) may be, but need not be, of Romano-British date and, as at Wharram Percy, what succeeded it (Cottam B) was an entirely different layout suggestive on the face of it of discontinuity rather than continuity.[61]

The significance of the cremation cemeteries found in York and the East Riding of Yorkshire, and of the larger number of mostly somewhat later inhumation cemeteries and isolated burials, distributed not only in the East Riding but also more widely in Northumbria, is equally uncertain. These cemeteries, which mostly date from the fifth to the seventh centuries, are barbarian in character and appear to provide evidence for a dominant English population. Cremation was not at this period a rite practised by the British of Roman Britain, who were in any case presumably Christian, so the practice of cremation suggests the arrival of barbarians who were largely uninfluenced by Roman culture. Indeed, the urns that they used can be closely paralleled in some cases with urns in the areas across the North Sea from which the English are thought to have come, notably Funen in Denmark (fig. 6). The transition visible in some of the cemeteries from cremation to inhumation was part of a Europe-wide trend and need in no way have been influenced by the sort of contact with the British population postulated by Models 1 and 2. The grave-goods with which the bodies were generally buried are generally of barbarian type: weapons, pottery, jewellery and so on. There are admittedly some objects, the style and design of which it is suggested indicate that they had been made by British craftsmen; but they could have been in the graves because they were booty or maybe purchases (fig. 7). Moreover, details of certain of the burial rites appear to be in line with barbarian practices rather than with British: burial alive of a female at the cemetery of Sewerby, for example, is directly in line with early medieval English law if she were an adulteress (fig. 8). When we add that there

[61] On West Heslerton, see Powlesland (1999); no full report has yet been published. On Driffield, see Loveluck (1996); on Cottam, see Richards (1999) and Richards (2000a); on Wharram Percy, see Beresford and Hurst (1991), pp. 71–2, and for discussion Rahtz (1988). Currently, no convincingly detailed basis has been presented for claiming that the early medieval settlement pattern emerged in the late Roman period and is therefore itself evidence of continuity.

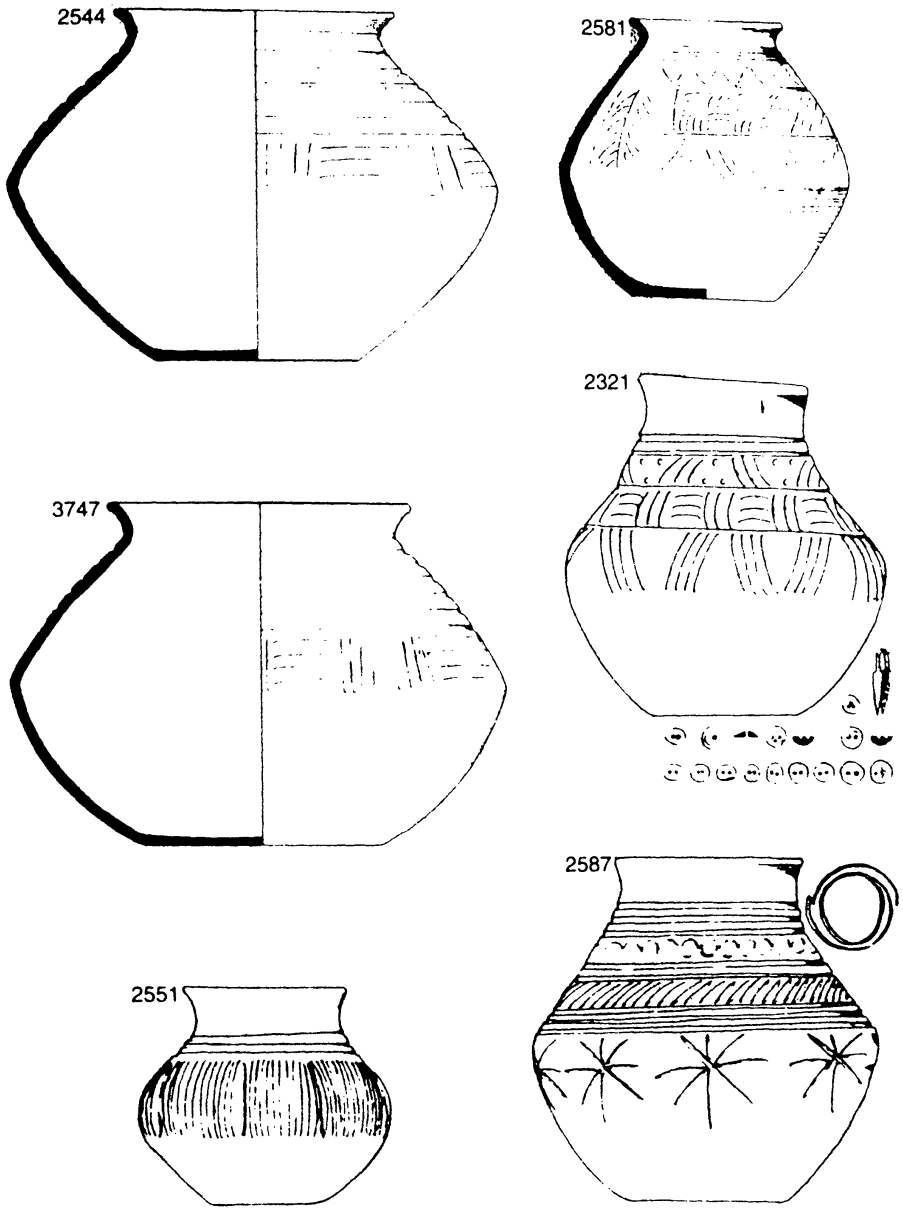



FIGURE 6 Sancton I cemetery (Yorkshire East Riding), cremation urns (from Myres and Southern (1973), fig. 26)
Note the incised and stamped designs on the urns, which are not wheel-thrown. No. 2321 particularly resembles urns from a cemetery in Funen (Denmark), and is thus evidence of contacts across the North Sea. See Myres and Southern (1973), and compare Myres (1969), pp. 75–6.

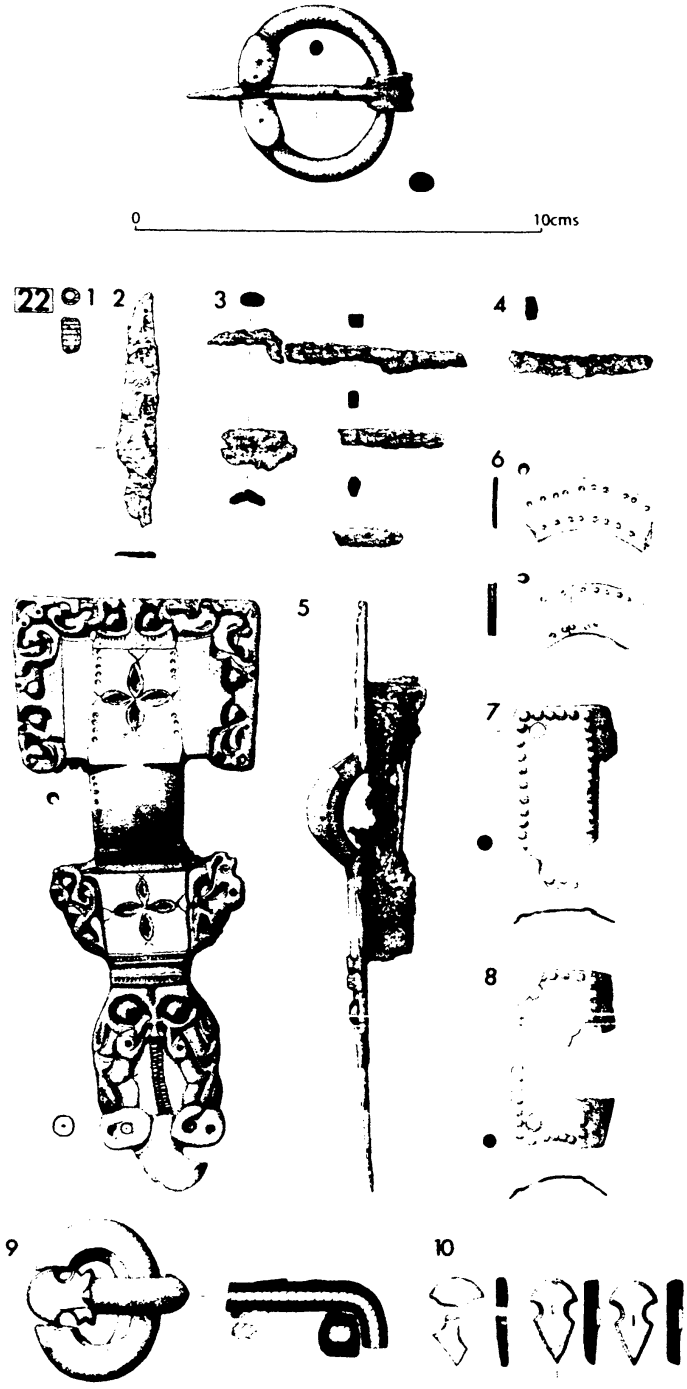



FIGURE 7 Norton-on-Tees (County Durham), grave-goods from the cemetery
The objects from Grave 22, that of a female, include a cruciform brooch (no. 5) of typically barbarian type, an annular brooch (no. 6), fragments of a wrist clasp (nos. 7–8) and a 'shield-on-tongue' buckle (no. 9). An object in British style is the penannular brooch from Grave 65. See Sherlock and Welch (1992), pp. 133, 167.

FIGURE 8 Sewerby (Yorkshire East Riding), reconstruction of the 'live burial' (G41) (drawing by David A. Walsh, from Hirst (1985), frontispiece)
The reconstruction represents Susan Hirst's interpretation of the burial as evidence of judicial killing for adultery resulting from rape; for views critical of this, see below, n. 62.

are no cemeteries at all which are *prima facie* British to set alongside these apparently barbarian cemeteries, our conclusion must be that the evidence presented here is strongly in favour of Model 3 and provides no support for Models 1 and 2.[62]

[62] Lucy (1999) and Thomas (1981), chs. 4–9. For British objects in cemeteries, see Faull (1977), pp. 4–5. On Sewerby, see Hawkes and Wells (1975); and discussion by Lucy (2000a), pp. 71–2, and Hirst (1993).

Four objections, however, can be raised to this conclusion. First, that the cemeteries we have been considering have been identified as English precisely because of the use of the rites of cremation and then of inhumation with grave-goods. British graves, it can be argued, may have been numerous but they would have been of inhumations without grave-goods. Such graves, lacking the evidence of dating and cultural affinity which grave-goods or cremation urns provide, may not have been discovered at all by archaeologists, or if discovered may not have been identified as graves of this period. The British were therefore far more numerous in Northumbria than excavation of cemeteries has allowed us to perceive. The discovery at Yeavering of such 'unfurnished' graves has given some substance to this objection since these have been interpreted as British graves.[63] Such unfurnished graves elsewhere are, however, impossible to date precisely, since dating relies almost exclusively on the dating of grave-goods according to their development in terms of style. They could therefore as well be English graves but after the conversion of the English to Christianity when the use of grave-goods declined and eventually came to an end.

Secondly, that the social status reflected in the English graves indicates that they are those of an English elite, ruling over a British Northumbria as in Models 1 and 2. This objection has been urged most cogently for Bernicia, where it has been argued that the inhumations with grave-goods contain objects of notably higher status than contemporary graves in southern England and therefore point rather to the presence of an elite than to an in-depth settlement of English as in Model 3; and that their scarcity (as opposed to their relative frequency in Deira) is also consistent with their being the graves of such an elite.[64] This objection, which in any case does not really apply to Deira, is itself open to being undermined. The higher status apparent in the Bernician graves is not especially clear-cut; what higher-status grave-goods there are need not in any case reflect on the actual social status of those buried, but rather on the wealth and upwardly mobile ambitions of those who survived them; and the relative scarcity of burials in Bernicia may simply reflect the fact that English settlement there was later, when grave-goods were already going out of fashion – so as a result we have not found or not identified more numerous English cemeteries and burials there, even if they existed.[65]

Thirdly, that the burial rites reflected in the cremations and inhumations with grave-goods may appear English, or at least 'barbarian', but were in

[63] Hope-Taylor (1977), pp. 70–8. [64] Alcock (1981).

[65] Miket (1980); on the use of grave-goods in general, see Härke (1990) and Geake (1997).

fact deeply influenced by a British population surviving on the sort of terms postulated by Models 1 and 2. Burials in which the bodies had their heads in a general northerly direction or were buried in a crouched position are found as a proportion of graves in Northumbrian cemeteries, and these positionings can be interpreted as British rather than English practices, on the grounds that they are found in burials of the Roman period at any rate in Yorkshire, whereas they are not generally characteristic of English burials elsewhere in England.[66] This objection too can be undermined, however: such positionings are found elsewhere in England in English contexts, and we cannot be sure therefore that what we see in Northumbria is British influence rather than a local variation on an English custom; nor is it easy to accept that the evidence of pre-Roman graves is germane to British custom as it might have existed in the period of the origins of Northumbria.[67]

The fourth objection is the opposite of the third. It derives from the view that burial customs reflect the aspirations of the living rather than the status and cultural affinities of the dead. In other words, those who arranged the burials were making a statement about their position in the world which may not have had any direct connection with their real position or that of the deceased.[68] Once this argument, which has an inherent plausibility, is accepted, the way is open to argue along the same lines as we have seen done in the case of language. The British, still very important in Northumbria as in Models 1 and 2, wished to align themselves with the dominant English elite. They therefore hastened to adopt English customs, of which burial rites are the most obvious to us in the archaeological record, and so effectively reconstructed their cultural identity as English. Thus what the apparently English cemeteries and burials actually show us is diametrically opposed to what they appear to do: they are evidence for British survival albeit under an English elite.[69] This objection is engagingly bold and contrary; but it suffers from the drawback that it requires what is in effect a leap of faith to accept that the evidence shows us the opposite of what it appears to, and is also unprovable.

If these objections are discounted, there is therefore nothing in the evidence we have which absolutely requires us to discard Model 3 in favour of the more peaceful processes of Models 1 and 2, with their emphasis on co-existence between British and English and the ultimate transformation

[66] Faull (1977), pp. 5–8.
[67] Sherlock and Welch (1992), pp. 27–30, and Lucy (2000a), pp. 171–2.
[68] Lucy (1999), pp. 22–3, and Lucy (2000b). See also Lucy (1998), pp. 17–21 and 104–6.
[69] For this view, see Powlesland (1997).

of British population into English. Moreover, an important objection to accepting Models 1 and 2 is the pronounced emphasis in our written sources on English–British hostility. Assessing the overall political situation in 731 when he finished his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede noted that 'for the most part, the British oppose the English through their inbred hatred'. Earlier he had praised the pagan king of Northumbria, Æthelfrith (d. 616), for ravaging the British 'more extensively than any other English ruler'. He continued: 'No ruler or king had subjected more land to the English race or settled it, having first either exterminated (*exterminauit*) or conquered the natives.' Bede's willingness to lavish such praise on a pagan king underlines the hatred of the British which this passage embodies. The British were the prey; their lands were the spoils; their removal justified extermination where necessary. British retaliation came from the king of Gwynedd, Cædwalla, who, after defeating and killing King Edwin at the Battle of Hatfield in 633, proceeded to mete out similar treatment to the Northumbrians: 'With bestial cruelty he put all to death by torture and for a long time raged through all their land, meaning to wipe out the whole English nation from the land of Britain.' A year later Cædwalla was back to kill the two kings who had succeeded Edwin, and 'after this he occupied the Northumbrian kingdoms for a whole year, not ruling them like a victorious king but ravaging them like a savage tyrant, tearing them to pieces with fearful bloodshed'.[70]

There seems no question here of a picture of English–British relations founded on peaceful transition from British to English rule, no fusing of peoples, no agreed take-over. What Bede is representing is a scenario all too familiar to modern observers, the forcible removal of one people to make way for another. Stephen, too, in his *Life of Wilfrid*, evokes a picture of violent expropriation: Wilfrid, he tells us, had received between 671 and 8 for his monastery at Ripon 'holy places' taken from the British clergy (*clerus Bryttannus*) who had fled from 'the point of the hostile sword wielded by the hand of our people' (*aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis nostre*).[71] The same hostility, no doubt reflecting that of the Northumbrians, is evident in the report of the papal legates to northern England in 786. Castigating the evil practices of Northumbrian Christians, this document makes the following accusation: 'You wear your clothes in the manner of the gentiles, whom by God's favour your fathers expelled from the land by force of arms.' It is not clear what exactly is being referred to since strictly speaking the British

[70] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 5 ch. 23, bk 1 ch. 34, bk 2 ch. 20, bk 3 ch. 1.

[71] Stephen, *Life Wilf.*, ch. 17.

were not 'gentiles', that is pagans; but the most natural interpretation of the passage seems to be that Alcuin was thinking of a violent expulsion of the British by the founding fathers of Northumbria.[72]

The British sources reciprocate this hostility by painting a picture of bitter conflict between the native British and the incoming English. The poems of Taliesin and *The Gododdin* attributed to Aneirin have, as we have seen, been used as if they constituted factual records, bearing for example on the date and political context of the Battle of *Catraeth* in *The Gododdin*, or of the Battle of *Gwaith Gwenystrad* in the poems of Taliesin.[73] Such an approach seems misguided. The events which provide the narrative framework of *The Gododdin* and the Taliesin poems might be based on actual history (as the Old English poem *The Battle of Maldon* was), but they might equally well be fictional or semi-fictional, like the Old English epic *Beowulf* or the Arthurian romances. In any case, they are primarily literature and not history. Together with the genealogies of the British, they evoked a vision of an age when the 'Men of the North' (*Gwyr y Gogledd*) battled heroically but with tragic futility against the English (*Lloegrwys*) who were depriving them of their birth-right, the rule of all Britain. The Welsh believed themselves descended from these 'Men of the North' through the (probably legendary) northern British ruler Cunedda who had, according to tradition, migrated with his eight sons from a place in the north called Manau Gododdin to found the various kingdoms of Wales.[74] For the medieval Welsh, then, Taliesin's poems and *The Gododdin* were part of their nostalgic view of an heroic past they believed was theirs, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's legendary *The History of the Kings of Britain*. As an aspect of what we might view as their national consciousness its evidence is clear: hostility to the English and a tradition of warfare against them was fundamental to it. A stanza from the A-version of *The Gododdin* reads:

> Warriors mustered. They met
> together. With a single intention they attacked.
> Their lives were short. Their friends' grieving for them was long.
> They killed seven times their number of men of England.
> In combat they made wives widows,
> many a mother with her tear on her eyelids.[75]

[72] For the text, Dümmler (1895), no. 3, ch. xix (p. 27): 'Vestimenta etiam uestra more gentilium, quos Deo opitulante, patres uestri de orbe armis expulerunt, induitis' (trans. *EHD I*, no. 191). For comment, suggesting that the Picts may have been the people referred to, see Wormald (1991), p. 33 and n. 19.

[73] See above, pp. 87, 89; and further Alcock (1987), pp. 253–4, and Koch (1997), pp. xiii–xxxiv.

[74] *Hist. Britons*, para. 62; see Miller (1976–8).

[75] Aneirin, *Gododdin*, stanza 56.

The theme is identical in Taliesin's poetic tribute to Urien of Rheged:

> You cause havoc
> when you advance;
> before dawn
> houses aflame
> before the lord of Erechwydd
> (fairest Erechwydd with her
> most generous men).
> The English are without protection
> because of the most courageous stock
> you are the best.[76]

The appeal of this in thirteenth-century Wales, the age of Llewelyn of Gwynedd's wars against the English and Edward I's savage conquest of Wales, is easily comprehensible. But how far did it go back? Both Taliesin and Aneirin are mentioned by Nennius in a passage which that writer appears to synchronize with the time of King Ida of the Northumbrians (who was active – Bede believed – between 547 and 559), so it could be assumed that the poetry dates from the period of the very origins of Northumbria.[77] Even if that is so (and we only have Nennius's uncorroborated synchronization to go on), it is likely that the texts have been significantly modified over the intervening centuries. In the case of *The Gododdin*, the process of change is certain, for the thirteenth-century manuscript in which it is preserved contains two versions, designated by scholars A and B, the latter more archaic in language and containing some additional stanzas. Although scholars agree that the language in which the B-version is composed is more ancient than the thirteenth century, it need not on grounds of the spelling of its text be older than *c.* 1100.[78] But it has been argued that the B-version allows us to reconstruct two earlier versions: the first written before 638 presumably in the kingdom of the Gododdin, the second in the mid-seventh century in the kingdom of Strathclyde. In these early versions hostility between the British and the English was lacking, for neither version viewed the English as enemies but rather as allies of the British in what was a battle between two British kingdoms: Gododdin and Deira (here regarded as a British kingdom). Only after the text reached North Wales some time after the mid-seventh century was it modified to represent the English as the enemies of

[76] Taliesin, *Poems*, 'You Are the Best' (Pennar (1988), pp. 53–8).
[77] *Hist. Britons*, para. 62; Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 5 ch. 24.
[78] Lucidly explained by Jarman (1988), pp. xv–xvii.

the British. In its earlier phases, therefore, *The Gododdin* could be seen as support for Model 2, and hostility between British and English would have been a subsequent development. It is an intriguing idea, but the argument involves subtle and somewhat conjectural argumentation about what the original version might or might not have contained.[79]

It is clear, moreover, English–British hostility was not a later development in other British sources. Even if we were to reject the dating of Taliesin as sixth century and accept a dating for his poetry as we have it of not later than *c.* 1100, we should still find a persistent theme of English–British hostility in Gildas, who was certainly writing before 600. For him, the English incomers were 'the ferocious Saxons (name not to be spoken!), hated by man and God'; their coming led to revolt and violent conquest by them, so that 'the cities of our land are not populated even now as once they were; right to the present they are deserted, in ruins and unkempt'.[80] Gildas may have been referring to other parts of Britain, but Nennius, writing in the first half of the ninth century, was definitely referring to Northumbria when he described how the sons of Ida, king of the Bernicians, had war waged on them by King Urien of Rheged, King Rhydderch Hen of Strathclyde, and two persons called Gwallawg and Morcant, the former possibly king of Elmet, as we have seen. One of Ida's sons 'fought vigorously' against Urien, who besieged him on Lindisfarne. Nennius was evidently not envisaging anything like Model 2, any more than he was with his account of King Edwin's expulsion of King Ceretic from Elmet.[81] The prominence of English–British hostility in texts from both sides of that divide is thus very striking, and it seems clear that in the minds of the writers the area of Northumbria played a large role in its genesis.

If we were disposed to accept Models 1 or 2, we could argue that this ethnic fault-line was paradoxically the result of the transformation of British into English which those models postulate. The process of defining a new identity for the former British, now *parvenu* English, of Northumbria involved hostility to British outside Northumbria as an aid to that process, while some parallel process of self-definition amongst those British involved reciprocal hostility to the English. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* suggests that such definitions of identity were indeed in process of construction in his time, for it lays emphasis on a series of origin legends which were no doubt

[79] Koch (1997), pp. lxxxix–cx, reviewed (with useful summary) by Padel (1998).

[80] Gildas, *Ruin*, paras. 23, 26.

[81] Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 63; see Williams, Smyth and Kirby (1991), entry 'Riderch Hen'. On Edwin and Ceretic, see above, p. 85.

part of them. The British, Bede tells us, had 'sailed to Britain, so it is said, from the land of Armorica, and appropriated to themselves the southern part of it'. He then goes on to give us an origin legend for the Picts. As the British were taking possession of the island beginning from the south, the Pictish race came from Scythia and 'sailed out into the ocean in a few warships and were carried by the wind beyond the furthest bounds of Britain, reaching Ireland and landing on its northern shores'. The Irish race (*gens Scottorum*) refused them permission to settle but advised them to go east and settle in Britain, which they did in the north 'because the British had seized the southern regions'. The Picts then asked the Irish for wives, which were granted on condition that the Picts should 'elect their kings from the female royal line rather than the male'.[82] We need not regard these legends as necessarily based on fact. Their purpose was to define peoples who had no over-arching political organization, the British being divided in Bede's time into separate kingdoms such as those of Strathclyde and Gwynedd, the Picts into at least the northern and southern Picts, and possibly other units since Bede speaks of 'kingdoms of the Picts'. The English were certainly envisaged in this way, and so too were the Irish, who were divided into a large number of kingdoms (*tuatha*). The British did have a linguistic coherence, however, speaking the same language, a Celtic language of the so-called P-type, known to modern scholars as 'British' and an ancestor of medieval Welsh. We have virtually no texts in Pictish apart from a king-list, and we can only begin to reconstruct the Pictish language from this scanty source, from words found embedded in place-names, and from some very obscure inscriptions. It seems, however, that the Pictish language was simply a different dialect of P-Celtic, although an earlier pre-Celtic language may also have been used. Regarding themselves in Bede's day as a coherent 'people of the Picts' and distinct from the British may therefore have been a quite recent development for the people north of the Forth–Clyde line.[83]

After providing origin-legends for the British and the Picts, Bede goes on to give an origin-legend for the Irish who lived in Dalriada, the kingdom centred on Argyll and the Western Isles. 'These came from Ireland under their leader Reuda, and won lands among the Picts either by friendly treaty or by the sword. These they still possess. They are still called Dalriadans (*Dalreudini*) after this leader, *Dal* in their language signifying part.' The

[82] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 1.

[83] For the texts, see Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 3 ch. 4 and bk 5 ch. 21. On the Irish, see O Croínín (1995), p. 111, and also Binchy (1970), lectures I and III. For the British language, see Jackson (1953), for the Pictish language, Jackson (1955) and Nicolaisen (2001), pp. 192–204.

implication of the use of *Dal* is presumably that Reuda had obtained part of north Britain for his people.[84] Bede then completes the picture with an origin-legend for the English. He repeats the story told by Gildas in *The Ruin of Britain* to the effect that under the rule of a 'proud tyrant', whom Bede identifies as Vortigern, the British invited three ship-loads of Anglo-Saxons as mercenaries, but these were joined by others, and the result was a revolt which effectively destroyed Roman Britain. The English, he writes:

> came from three very powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, *Angli*, and Jutes. The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin and also that people (*gens*) opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of Wessex which is still today called the nation (*natio*) of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is the district now known as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this, from the country of the *Angli*, that is, the land between the kingdoms of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East *Angli*, the Middle *Angli*, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (*progenies*) – that is those peoples (*gentes*) who dwell north of the river Humber – as well as the other peoples (*populi*) of the *Angli*. *Angulus* is said to have remained deserted from that day to this.[85]

Some of the subsidiary peoples named in this passage had their own origin myths. Those of the West Saxons and the South Saxons constitute the early annals in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which are now widely recognized as being mythological rather than factual. For example, the annal for 495 which must reflect the West Saxon origin legend, complete with eponymous place-name: 'Here two chieftains, Cerdic and Cynric his son, came to Britain with five ships at the place which is called Cerdic's Shore.'[86] The origin myth of the people of Kent, to which Bede refers, was clearly bound up with the story of Vortigern inviting the English leaders Hengest and Oisc to Britain, a story which Nennius also tied closely to the kingdom of Kent, presumably using information derived from its people.[87]

The origin myth of the Northumbrians may be contained in a story given by Nennius of how Vortigern also invited to Britain the English leaders Octha and Ebissa with forty ships and they 'came and occupied many districts beyond the Frenessican Sea, as far as the borders of the Picts'. Although

[84] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 1. On Dalriada, see Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (1973) and Bannerman (1974); on the reality of the migration, see Cummins (1995), pp. 50–6, and Lane and Campbell (2000), pp. 32–4, and references therein.

[85] Gildas, *Ruin*, paras. 22–4; Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 15.

[86] See, for example, Sims-Williams (1980); and see also Howe (1989); for the text, *ASC*, *s.a.* 495.

[87] Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, paras. 36–8, 43–6; Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 15, bk 2 ch. 5.

the name Frenessican Sea is obscure, the reference to 'the borders of the Picts' presumably indicates that Northumbria is the area being referred to. Scholars have tried to interpret the passage as an actual description of the English settlement of Northumbria, but it seems obvious that, if the passage has any value, it is as an origin myth of the Northumbrian people, to which we should no more attribute factual reliability than we should to the story of the *Angli*, Saxons and Jutes coming in three ships. It may be reflected in Gildas's more general observation that the English (*Saxones*) came to the 'east side' of Britain 'to beat back the peoples of the north' (i.e. the Picts and the Irish).[88]

These accounts in Bede are evidence for a situation in which concepts of 'peoples' were in process of formation in early England, and it seems likely that what we are seeing in our written sources is a reflection of the process by which the ruling families and their elite followers defined and consolidated their positions by recording or fabricating the origin myths of their peoples. That this was a recent development for the English in general and the Northumbrians in particular in Bede's time may be indicated by uncertainty and variation in our sources in the use of the terms 'English' and 'Northumbrian'. *Angli* in the writings of Bede and his contemporaries is often translated 'Angles', but in fact it is simply the Latin word for 'English'. In the passage quoted above, however, Bede is using it to mean only one of the ethnic groups which made up the English people, of which the other two were the Jutes and the Saxons. But in a preceding passage he referred to the 'Saxons or the English (*Angli*)' as if the names were interchangeable. In the title of the *Ecclesiastical History*, which should be describing the history of the English (*Angli*), Saxons and Jutes in common, and elsewhere in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede simply uses 'the English people' (*gens Anglorum*) or 'the English' (*Angli*) to refer to all the inhabitants of Britain who were not British, Picts or Irish.[89] This inconsistency may be the result of novelty. It is possible that the word 'English' had only recently been used for all the inhabitants of Britain who were not British, Picts or Irish; and that the development of this usage had been influenced by the papacy. Gregory the Great appears to have been the first writer to refer to the Germanic inhabitants of Britain under the generic name 'English'. The usage may further have been influenced by the story which Bede and the anonymous Whitby

[88] Nennius, *Hist. Britons*, para. 38, and Gildas, *Ruin*, para. 23. If by 'east side', however, Gildas meant the south-east and East Anglia, the passage may not relate to Northumbria at all. For discussion, see Peter Hunter Blair (1947), pp. 13–17.

[89] Putnam Fennell Jones (1929), under appropriate entries. For discussion, see Brooks (2000), pp. 6–7.

biographer of Gregory the Great told about that pope seeing English slave-boys in the market at Rome: on being told that they were English (*Angli*), he declared that 'they have the face of angels (*angeli*), and such men should be fellow-heirs of the angels in heaven'. The pun only worked for *Angli*, not for *Saxones*, and it is conceivable that this spurious etymology for the name, with its associations with missionary activity, influenced the choice of *Angli* as the generic name for the Germanic inhabitants of Britain. Bede himself may have played a part in establishing that choice, in deliberately seeking in his *Ecclesiastical History* to create a concept of English nationality, perhaps as part of his support for an over-arching English church under the jurisdiction of the see of Canterbury. There may even have been a deliberate change in Bede's usage, from 'Saxons', when the English he was writing about were pagans, to *Angli* when they became Christian.[90]

Similar uncertainty and variation of terminology in contemporary writers is apparent in the use of *Northanhymbri* (Northumbrians), alongside other apparently synonymous names, *Aquilonales* (people of the North), *Septentrionales Angli* (northern English), *Transhymbrana gens* (people across the Humber), *Ultrahumbrenses* (people from beyond the Humber) and *Humbrenses* (people of the Humber). All this suggests the concept of a people in a state of genesis. That the term 'Northumbrian' was new and required explanation may be suggested by Bede's repeated and, to our mind, tautologous explanations of it as 'those who dwell to the north of the Humber'.[91] As an explanation for the emphasis on English–British hostility in our sources, however, the notion that the formation of ethnic identities was recent and likely therefore to have produced tensions is inadequate. Bede, for example, gives no such account of hostility between the English and the Picts who, despite having killed King Ecgfrith of the Northumbrians in 685 and a Northumbrian prefect in 698, are described as being on terms of peace and friendship with the Northumbrians. The Irish are treated with similar friendliness, and Bede even regrets the attack made on them by King Ecgfrith in 684.[92]

Were we to accept Model 3 we should not need to look further than it for an explanation for English–British hostility. On the British side it would have arisen from the way in which the invading English had treated them;

[90] See Tugène (2001b), pp. 87–8, and Brooks (2000), pp. 7, 16–17, 18, 22. On the importance of Canterbury in creating a sense of Englishness, see Wormald (1983), pp. 122–9. For the texts, see Letter to Augustine, quoted in Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 1 ch. 29; and *Life Greg.*, ch. 9 (p. 91); the same story is found in Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 2 ch. 1.

[91] For references and discussion, Peter Hunter Blair (1948), pp. 99–104, and Tugène (2001b), p. 63; on Bede's use of 'Northumbrians', see above, p. 25 n. 11.

[92] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, bk 4 ch. 26 (24), bk 5 ch. 24.

whilst fear of British reprisals would then have lain at the root of hostility on the English side. In accepting the reality of hostility between the two peoples, we need not accept that the violent displacement or degradation of the British population postulated by Model 3 necessarily occurred shortly after the end of Roman rule, which may well have been followed by relations more like those postulated by Model 1 or 2, although we have seen that that is difficult to prove. The events which made such friendly relations inconceivable to Bede and his contemporaries may have occurred relatively recently. The evidence suggests that Northumbrian expansionary warfare against the British occurred from the late sixth century onwards. Nennius's account of the siege of Lindisfarne by the confederation of British kings may admittedly not be a factual account; but, if it is, it relates to the end of the sixth century. Whatever our doubts about Nennius, Bede's account of the attacks on the British made by King Æthelfrith of Northumbria (d. 616) must surely reflect a genuine tradition about his activities transmitted in Northumbria. The acquisition of lands from the British clergy used for the endowment of Wilfrid's monastery at Ripon may well have occurred shortly before their being granted, that is the years 671–8. The places in question in this endowment were Ribble, Yeadon, Dent and Catlow, which, if they have been correctly identified, lay west of the Pennine watershed and thus represent a westward Northumbrian advance at the expense of the British.[93] Northumbrian expansion along the northern shores of the Solway Firth may have happened around the same time to judge from the appearance in the early eighth century of the first English bishop of Whithorn, which was then established as a Northumbrian see. The establishment of a Northumbrian bishopric at Abercorn on the Firth of Forth, the only known bishop of which was Trumwine (681–5), may have been part of the same round of expropriations of the British. Warfare against them may have continued, for King Eadberht of Northumbria is recorded in a laconic entry in the Northern Annals to have conquered the Plain of Kyle in 750, and he is later recorded to have attacked the kingdom of Strathclyde in alliance with the Picts.[94]

The question of the origin of the Northumbrians is thus a highly complex one. There is some evidence to suggest that there was a peaceful transition from British to English in Northumbria so that the kingdom of Northumbria

[93] Stephen, *Life Wilf.*, ch. 17; on the identifications, see Colgrave (1927), n. to ch. 17, citing H. M. Chadwick (pers. comm.). On Dent and Yeadon, see G. J. R. Jones (1995), pp. 29–36, who considers Yeadon to have been in the West Riding.

[94] See above, pp. 32, 43. The reluctance of the British to accept the 'Roman' calculation of the date of Easter favoured by Bede may have played a part in that writer's hostility to them (Charles-Edwards (1983)); but it cannot provide the entire explanation for the reciprocal hostility discussed above.

essentially remained a British area with a population of British extraction which had assumed an English identity and acquired an English language. But the evidence is not so strong that we need feel compelled to accept it; and, since that process would have effaced much of the evidence for that population's original Britishness, it is not easy to prove or disprove it.[95] As we have seen, it is not unreasonable to accept that the population of Northumbria was predominantly composed of English incomers who had killed, displaced or degraded the native British inhabitants, making Northumbria English by those means. The most prominent feature of the period, however, is the extent to which, by whatever process, Northumbria was English at least by Bede's time, and the hostility which is manifested in the texts between those who claimed that English identity and their British neighbours. How far that hostility was consolidated by cultural differences between British and English, and how far culture played a part in the creation of Northumbria, is the subject of the next chapter.

[95] See the most recent survey of research by Loveluck (2002).